Quiet Talks on the Bible Story

S. D. Gordon

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Quiet talks on the Bible
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QUIET TALKS ON THE BIBLE STORY

OR

The Story of Free Choice, God's Greatest Love-Gift to Man, Never Taken Back, and Never Will Be

S. D. GORDON'S
QUIET TALKS

Quiet Talks on Power
Quiet Talks on Prayer
Quiet Talks on Service

Quiet Talks About Jesus
Quiet Talks on Personal Problems
Quiet Talks with World Winners

Quiet Talks About the Tempter
Quiet Talks on Home Ideals
Quiet Talks About Our Lord's Return

Quiet Talks on Following the Christ
Quiet Talks About the Crowned Christ of the Revelation
Quiet Talks on John's Gospel

Quiet Talks on the Deeper Meaning of the War
Quiet Talks About Life After Death
Quiet Talks About Simple Essentials

Quiet Talks About the Healing Christ
Quiet Talks on the Crisis and After
Quiet Talks on How to Pray

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QUIET TALKS
ON
THE BIBLE STORY

By
S. D. GORDON
Author of "Quiet Talks on Power," "Quiet Talks on How to Pray," etc.

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To
MY ELECT LADY
Who Still Smooths My Way,
Clears My Brain,
Warms My Heart,
And Rounds Out My Life.

PREFACE

THIS is a double story. There is the story of how the Bible started and grew. And there is the other story, the bigger story, which the Bible itself tells.

Mostly, it is simply a telling again, in simple every-day English, of the story the Bible itself tells. There is no discussing nor proving of anything, no argument. It is simply a recital, afresh, in simple brief connected shape, of the story the Bible itself is, and tells.

Our King James Bible is a most remarkable bit of translation work. It is most striking how the few great outstanding truths which are central in our Christian faith are put simply and clearly and with gracious repetition.

When one thinks back into the long ages of discussion and doubt and dim light, the different languages involved, the precarious preservation of manuscripts, the individuality of scholarly research and translation, it is most striking and notable. Plainly, the Holy Spirit's gracious direct oversight is the one explanation.

Yet, it is not at all surprising that there is so much room for a putting into fresh present-day English of what is actually being said here. And it gives a homely tang, and a sharp com-

pelling touch and tug to the truth, to get it in this shape.

This will be noted in the frequent paraphrases which I love to dig out for my own better understanding. They require endless tedious digging, to get the accurate meaning of the words under the English; and to put it into such simple language that there seems no study at all.

The two Revisions, English and American, have the advantage of old manuscripts not available when our common English Bible was translated. Their use of paragraphing is a practical help in getting a connected story and meaning in the old pages.

Though the rare simple dignified diction of our priceless King James version is missed sometimes. And one does love the old familiar words, with their fragrant memories.

The word "Jew" is used throughout, instead of the earlier words, "Hebrew" and "Israelite," simply because it is the word in common use.

S. D. G.

New York.

Sometimes, some persons, with probably the best intention, quite sincerely, take sentences out of their connection, and so fail to understand the connected teaching; and so they are apt to think that there is wrong teaching, or deficient teaching.

So I am putting down here this simple plain statement of just what I believe, and have always believed, and tried to teach the best I could by tongue and pen, regarding the essential truths of the old Gospel of Christ.

I Believe in the Word of God, as inspired directly and fully by the Holy Spirit through the men who wrote. This applies to the entire book, from cover to cover.

I Believe in the deity of Jesus Christ; that He was very God of very God, born of the virgin Mary by the direct creative act of the Holy Spirit.

I Believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins on the Cross as our substitute Saviour, and only through His precious blood shed is there salvation for any one of all the race.

I Believe that sin is an act of rebellion against God's perfect love-will, and that it is so damnable that there is no escaping the consequences of it except through the blood of Christ.

I Believe that every man must make personal choice of Christ as his Saviour for present character and future destiny; and only so is there salvation for him from unending death in the future world.

I Believe in the Pentecostal fulness of the Holy Spirit, and that through this blessed experience one may live a life of purity and holiness, in the purpose of his heart, and increasingly in actual practice.

I Believe that Our Lord Jesus is coming back again in person to bring in the Kingdom reign, and His coming is a thing to be expected in our day.

S. D. GORDON.

THE HUMAN IMPRINT

ALL that's wrong in the world goes straight back to man's use of his freedom to choose as he chooses, and grows out of it. Though it's rarely traceable, and never fully.

Every heart-ache and heart-break, every bit of suffering, every lone sick-room, every sodded grave, every broken life and home, every pain of body and heart, every blasted hope, is the result, direct or indirect or both, of somebody's use of his power to choose as he chooses.

It is all heart-breaking to God, ever afresh heart-breaking. Yet God will not take back His greatest gift to man, the right of full free power to choose as he chooses to, nor interfere with its use. He woos, but leaves us free to choose.

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THE WARP AND SHUTTLE-THREADS

With Which These Stories Are Woven

Love Is God.

The story is the universal language, back through the ages, clear around the planet. It is peculiarly characteristic of the Orient. It is equally so of Africa. It is actually so everywhere.

It is the child's language, the crowds', and—softly—the scholars', when off dress parade. "Make it a story" is the modern newspaper rule.

Everybody loves a story, every boy, every girl, and everybody else. The Bible is a story. That word tells the story of it better than any other.

It is a story of love. So it is a love story. Only you've got to get clear and straight just what that word "love" means.

For no word has been so cheapened, and slandered, and misunderstood, and even dragged in the gutter, as that fine rare word "love."

There is a simple striking sentence in this old Book, a three-worded sentence, often quoted, rarely if ever really understood by any of us, and never fully; "God is love."

All that love is, that's what God is. All that God is, that's what love is. If you know the

one, either one, you know the other. If you don't know the one, either one, you don't know the other.

As a matter of simple fact we men don't know much about God, and we don't know much about love. That is, I mean, the real thing of love.

We know the word, of course. And yet every one, without exception, knows something of love, the real thing. For we live, really live, only as we love, really love some one and are loved by some one.

And in as far as we really know love we know God, though we don't think of it that way. For all love is of God. Every bit of love in the human heart is a bit of God there.

It's a bit of his image in us, the image in which we were made. Wherever there is true love there is likeness to God, so far.

There's often a weak sentimentality in the use of that holy word "love." And often the word love is used for what is not love at all, but may be a base imitation. It clears one's brain to think into what love, real true love, really truly is.

Love is a knot on the end, yes, both ends and the middle, too, of a notable bundle of traits. It isn't any one or two of these, but all of them, and all of them so intertwined and interwoven into one, that you can't get them apart.

All the tenderness of the tenderest heart, and all the wisdom of both wise head and wise heart, that's a characteristic blend of what real love is.

The unselfishness that thinks of others to help them wisely, and yet thinks of itself so as never

to be a burden on others, that's love, thoughtful and strong.

The modesty that does its best, and most, with never a word about it; and then slips quietly and quickly into the shadow out of the glare, that's a sure touch of true love.

The clinging tenacity that holds on, and holds tight, and never gives up, nor gives in, but clings unshakably to the endless end, that's love, the real thing in the sharp competition of life.

The courage that faces the toughest odds, and fights, fights against toughest fighting, and never thinks of quitting until the thing, or the one fought for, is fully won, that's true brave love.

The purity that unfalteringly scorns the lie, acted or spoken, the taint however faint, the compromise with right however slight, and clings to the ideal even to the chill waters of the river, that is the simon-pure thing of love.

The intolerance that won't accept or put up with any shade or shadow below the one line of the pure and the true, even while graciously doing the utmost to help the man enmeshed and entangled, that is a rare trait of the real thing of love.

The wrath that hates the mean and the false, that *writhes* in pain, at touch or sight of the impure, and flames out with white heat against these, and their kin folk near and far, that indeed is love showing its true inner nature.

The discrimination that sees what is wrong and bad and evil in some one tenderly loved; and that clings to that person faithfully and

tenderly, and yet rejects the bad, this is love at its best, under subtlest fire.

The rare patience that sees and knows all that shouldn't be, and feels with keenest suffering into the inner marrow of the bone, and yet, *yet,* holds steady, and never breaks step, that's love at its very rarest and best and truest.

And, be it keenly noted, love is not one of these traits, nor two; it's all of them. It's all of them blended and welded into one by its own intense heat of fine pure passion.

But, there's yet more. All this can be put into one simple tense unfathomable word, love *gives.* This is its very life. In giving it is living, and only so. Its life is giving.

It gives. It gives the dearest, the best, the most. It gives *itself,* clean out. That puts all into one word. That's what love is. That is putting God into human words. For God is love. Love is God.

And this, be it keenly marked, is the warp into which is woven all the shuttle threads that make up the fabric of this old Book of God. This warp, the basis of the weaving, is supplied by God.

Love Gives Itself Out.

Now, hush your heart, and look keenly at the shuttle-threads, weaving in and out and through the strands of this wondrous warp. There are five of these shuttle-threads.

Note the first: God, Love, gave himself out to another. He gave himself to get another. That other was like himself, of course.

Reverently, be it said, he wanted another who could be his fellow. For only those alike can have fellowship. Yet more reverently let it be said; he *needed* another like himself. For love must give. That is its life. In giving it is living.

There would be likeness, of course. There was. In giving himself God made man in his own likeness. That would mean moral likeness. It meant freedom of choice, utter and full. For moral quality comes only through free action. Moral character is made by one's choice, and only so.

Freedom to choose is the essential likeness of God. It is the outstanding trait of God, of love. For love is only love when freely given. And the sovereign greatness of God is this, that he is absolutely sovereign in his power to choose.

This stands out as man's essential likeness to God, his full freedom to choose as he chooses to choose. This was given that creative morn.

It is given afresh, again, to very man at birth. It has never been taken back. It never will be, neither here nor in the world to come.

Man will always remain in the likeness of God in this, even when he becomes wholly unlike God in every other way, through his use of this freedom.

Choice Creates.

Now, be it keenly marked, choice is creative. Character is made by choice. Character is the moral dents a man makes in himself by his choices. Character can be made only by choice.

With the utmost reverence, let it be said that God cannot make character except in himself.

Man is free to choose. Love makes him free to choose. Choice creates. Right choice, good choice, creates good character. Bad choice, evil choice, choosing not to choose the right, this creates bad character.

This explains all the good in the world. It came through good choice. This explains evil in the world. It's the direct outcome of bad choice, not good choice, choosing not to choose the one right.

All the evil in the world, every bit of pain and suffering, every heart-break, all the bitter inequalities, is the direct outcome of man's use of his power to choose as he chooses.

It is all heart-breaking to God. Yet he will not take back his love gift to man of free choice. He cannot and be true to himself. He cannot and be true to love.

What he does do is to work entirely *through* man's free choice. And here will be the great victory at the last. Through man's use of his free choice God's own plan for man, and for the earth, will work out, with overflowing fullness.

This explains Jesus. The thing Jesus did in dying was to clear up man's badness by giving his own life clear out as a Saviour.

Then, he sent down the Holy Spirit on the special errand of helping man choose right, and so grow the new good character.

And in all this, choice is still the decisive thing. A man chooses Christ as his Saviour, if

he does. Then he chooses to surrender to the Christ's mastery in his life, if he does.

So, the Holy Spirit can come in, with full power to lead the man into the true full original image that is native to him. And all this is through his choosing power.

This is the dominating shuttle-thread back and forth through the strands of the warp. It is man's shuttle-thread.

The Light Never Quits Shining.

Now, to make right choice, there must be clear understanding. There must be light. So, one can see clearly just what he should choose to choose, and what he should choose to refuse.

And so Love opens the windows wide, and floods in clear full light. Love is light, soft, clear, penetrating. God gives light. God is light. He gives himself. So in the light of his light man can see clearly. And so he can choose the one only right.

The flood light was in that Eden Garden. That fatal choice there was made in a flood of clear light. That was the sheer badness of it.

Light, clear, true, penetrating, wooing, shines there, and has shined ever since, and shines. There never has been any lack of light. The whole trouble has been with men's eyes. They shut their eyes willfully. It's a matter of choosing to.

Yet they never could shut out all the light. Nobody can. Some comes in through the closed eyelids; much; enough to lead to opening eyes and wide open eyes.

This flooding of the light is God's part, Love's insistent faithfulness. The story comes back to this again and again. This shuttle thread of clear light, in the weaving of this story, is a big part. It is God's part.

Man Starts Things Going.

There is another shuttle thread racing back and forth through the warp in the fabric of this fascinating story. The initiative of action on the earth is wholly in man's hands. It always has been. He starts things going. Everything that has come or happened has been through his initial starting.

God insists on this. Life on the earth is precisely what man makes it by his actions, his use of his right of free choice.

God's hand is on all life, creatively, all the time. He himself is life, all the life that we know and have. And there is no other.

On each new babe born, on all human life, and in all nature, is that unfailing creative touch. It is his unrelaxing creative touch and presence that keeps life going. That creative touch is the background.

Now, with this background, the initiative of action is wholly man's. He sets things moving. God quickly responds to man's need up to the very last limit of fully informed loving wisdom. But the initiative remains in human hands.

There is one exception to this, a very occasional exception. That is the touch of the supernatural in the story. It is there. But it is very rare in its scarcity, through the long ages of the

story. And it is always in some sort of emergency. Indeed the supernatural touch always tells of some terrific moral emergency.

And the touch is slight, a mere touch. And it is always through the human channel. This occasional touch makes it yet plainer that the initiative of action in the affairs of life is always in human hands.

Man starts things going, and keeps them going. The way things have gone is the way man set them going, and keeps them going. History is a photograph of man's choice and actions.

This puts tremendous emphasis on man's free choice. Even at the risk of things going to smash (as they have done twice, the Flood and Sodom) God insists that man shall ever be like himself in his sovereign free choice. This shuttle thread in the weaving is decidedly and decisively man's.

The Experiment Station.

There is one other shuttle-thread. This earth of ours is an experiment station. It is *the* experiment station of the universe. God's plan that man can be trusted with free choice is being tested out here. It is love's great experiment. It magnifies man peculiarly.

That word " experiment " is used here to mean that a principle is being put to the test of actual experience. God insists that man can be *trusted* with free choice, that he will use this greatest power to choose the right, and only the right.

The earth may, or may not, be the material center of the universe. The scientists have split

pretty even on that; with the more recent trend that it is not. The Bible story says nothing on this point.

But, quite clearly, it is *the moral center* of the universe. All eyes, of countless intelligences, above and below, are riveted here, watching intently the struggle, and the outcome.

Man is really the rare stuff being experimented with. The earth is the laboratory, the proving ground. God is man's Advocate. He insists that the outcome will prove man's moral greatness as originally created.

This holy experiment is being hotly contested. Throughout the story there is a dark sinister figure, behind the scenes, lurking in the dark, at times forced into the open.

He himself had failed at this very point. His power of free choice was used wrongly, egotistically, badly. This is his sore spot, extremely sore. His failure changed his character, from the son of the light (Lucifer), to the son of the night, the hater (Satan), the exact opposite of God.

His opposition has gotten a big start. Yet the story says that he is due to sheer dead failure. The experiment, run out to the full, will make clear man's inherent moral greatness as created. It will make clear that God is indeed love in all its tremendous meaning.

This, only this, explains Jesus. Jesus was God himself coming as a man, a true full human. He came to make clear that man could be trusted with free choice, and would use it only to choose only the right, in the face of fiercest opposition.

Then he gave his very life's blood to clean up a man's past; and start him afresh on the original Eden plan. He *could* give his life because it was his own.

Every other man of the race has forfeited life through failure to obey. It is a commonplace of daily life that obedience holds right or title, and only so. All others have forfeited life through breaking with God, the source of life.

For a full generation the persistent attempt was made to get Jesus to break with the Father, and so automatically forfeit his life.

Through Nazareth, the Wilderness, the active service years, the threatened Cross, then the actual Cross with all its indignity and shame, the terrific contest ran.

But Jesus held steady. He kept in full touch with his Father, and his Father's plan for his human career, even to death, aye, the death of the Cross.

And so he *could* give his life for others. It was his own, in a distinctive sense, true of none other.

No other could, or can, die for his fellows in the distinctive sense that Jesus did. And so that death meant and means just what Jesus meant it to mean. It was for others in the distinctive substitute sense.

Four Other Bright Threads.

There are two other groups of shuttle threads woven into the fabric of the story. One group is bright, golden shiny bright.

The other group of threads is dark, dirty,

gray-black, grimy, pot-black. Let us pick these threads out and take a quick look at them. For then we can better appreciate their part in the pattern. There are four threads in each group.

Here are the four glory coloured threads. Run through this remarkable story fabric, and they are easily picked out. They stand out clear and shining.

There's a standard of right, moral right. It runs from one end clear to the other. It never varies. It is as clear and bright and distinctive in Eden's Garden as at Horeb, and at the Sermon Mount, and in the enriched Garden-City at the very end.

Then, there is power given to reach up to the standard. The giving is free, and lavish. The power is within the reach of every one. It is always full enough to reach up to the standard, with a good margin, and with rare joy in the reach.

Back of that standard of right conduct, and that power available to each one to reach it, is love. It's a personal love. Of course, love is always personal, or it's not the real article. It is an insistent love, setting the standard high and clear.

It is a pure appealing love, wooing each one up to the standard with tender steady pull. It is a thoughtful generous love, giving power to reach up to the standard in actual conduct, and stay put.

And the fourth thread is the most appealing of all. It catches the eye and the fingers, and the heart and life. Back of that standard, that

power, that tender strong love, is a Person. He embodies in himself standard, and power, and above all, love.

Four Other Ugly Threads.

Then, then, there is the other group of threads, the dirty black, the grimy gray, the repulsive threads. You would prefer to ignore them. Yet you know that's not good sense. Things must be seen as they are before they can be changed to what they ought to be.

There's a lower standard of conduct. It sticks out everywhere. It's a shifty wobbly standard. The fact is, it is a standardless standard. There is a driving ahead in doing the wrong thing. It is brazen and open, impudent and incorrigible.

There's plainly a lack of power to reach up to that one standard of right. It really is a failure to *take* the power needed, and use it. They choose to refuse.

They seem to prefer the gutter slime to the mountain top, with variations all the way between. Everywhere this ugly thread is woven in in the fabric of the story.

Then, there is a spirit of hate, with endless variations of selfishness, and jealousy, bitterness and lust, hot temper and open violence.

It's like a swarming brood of poisonous vipers, too big to count, too vigorous to kill off effectively. At least they are never killed off. This thread pushes insistently, uglily up, in the pattern.

And, then, back of all, ever slinking in the dark, hugging the back of the scenes, though

later forced out into the open, here and there, is a strange evil princely personality.

You detect marks of former greatness. There are traces of rare personal beauty. But these are all stained and scarred with the ugliest stains and blots and scars.

Always this personality is there, pulling wires, pushing insistently in, stirring up foulest action in fairest setting. Always he is trying to hide, and always tampering, interfering, intriguing, and worse.

The Central Figure—Man.

And, at the center of the pattern being woven out, is man. His presence dominates the pattern. He is the one outstanding figure in the story being pictured in this rare tapestry.

He is a rare personality, rare in beauty of person, in grasp of mentality, in power of will, in tenderness of emotion, in glory of achievement, superb in conduct, a sovereign in his right and power of free choice.

He is constantly being wooed, and tempted, wooed up, tempted away. There is a pull up, and a pull away and down. That "up" reaches to the very closest intimacy of fellowship with God himself. That "away and down" tugs steadily toward the lowest hell.

And *he* decides. Ever he decides. His decision makes the story, and the future. His character is moulded by his own hands. His future is of his own making.

Everything goes as he chooses. He remains sovereign even when in the gutter. He climbs

the highest hill, with far view, and life giving air, on his own feet.

The Echoed Cry.

Over in London there is a man; sometimes a bit scarce anywhere, one sometimes thinks. He is commonly known as the Prince of Wales. And a right worthy prince he seems to be, of a notable royal family.

But he is a man, too. David Windsor seems just a bit bigger than the Prince of Wales. The man isn't lost in the title. He dignifies it, not it him.

This simple fact came out in an unusual way a bit ago. The coal mining industry in England has been in a bad way ever since the war. Several most difficult conditions have combined in a strange way. And the people have suffered. That's the bitter part there, as so much everywhere.

The suffering and distress really seem to have beggared language. And all the while the national leaders have been cudgeling wits and hearts to get things somehow fixed up. The best British brains are working at it.

Up in the mining regions of Yorkshire, where the distress has been so acute, the word spread that the Prince of Wales was coming up. He wanted to see for himself how things were. He wanted to do something to alleviate the sore suffering.

But the common people couldn't believe such good news. "No, no, he isn't coming;" "yes, he is; he really is." So the word ran back and

forth. The grapevine telegraphy spread the conflicting words, here, there, everywhere.

Then he came. Wrapped up in greatcoat, collar turned up, he plodded through slush and mud, with open eyes, grave face, tempered smile, and gripping hand clasp.

Into the cheerless cottages, by the comfortless sick beds, in touch with broken-hearted despair, with warm hand grip, and unabashed moist eyes, he went, and looked; he felt, and saw. His presence, the evident pain, his attitude, told of a man, a human, inside the prince.

One day he was making his way slowly, through the thronging crowds, in one village, when his quick ear caught a voice, a cry. It sounded like an old woman's voice, high pitched, weak, tremulous, insistent. It cut the cold wintry air like a keen-edged knife. "I canna see. *Let me touch him.*"

Quick as a flash the Prince turned, cleared a way through the thronging crowd, took the old woman's hand in his own, gently patting it, with a few simple words of comfort.

Ah! The Prince had come. It was true. She knew by the feel. He cared. He had a heart. The longing of a human heart, in its sore need, for the son of the king, was satisfied. He could help. He surely would help. He had come.

"*Let me touch him.*" It's the cry of the human heart to-day, and yesterday, and every day, everywhere, and through the suffering ages. The human heart has felt there must be some God who cares.

It has cried out for that touch. That's why

Jesus came, for that touch, to give it? Aye, more, to get it.

And, mark keenly, that cry of the human heart is an echo. Man is a sounding board for God's heart. It's the echoed cry of the heart of God: "Let *me* touch *him*.

"Through the doorway of his glad free choice, let me reach in and get in touch again. We had touched in Eden. Then bad choice broke touch. Let me touch him."

Jesus was God coming for the touch, to give it, and to get it. And some day his great heart will be gladly content in the full warm freely chosen touch with man, in the rarely cultured Garden-City, with its crystal river of life.

This is the warp and shuttle-threads with which the story of the Book is woven into a tapestry of great beauty.

I

THE STORY OF HOW THE BIBLE STARTED AND GREW

1. Why a Book; the Need; the Occasion

The Need of a Book.

Need is the starting point of all human activities, sometimes sore need. Need draws a man to his knees. And the use of the knees quickly leads to the use of brain and hands and feet. Praying always leads to thinking and doing.

This tells the story of how the Bible started. It was to meet a need. The Book and the Jew nation were born at the same time. They were born of the same mother, need. They grew up together, each strengthening the other.

The Book was for the Jew in the start. And the Jew nation was to guard the Book for all the race.

Both were started for the same errand. It was an errand to all the race. That errand was to preserve the light man must have in order to choose.

The light must be kept shining and flooding into man's face. Even though he shut his eyes he still could not avoid that light, soft, clear, strong, penetrating, illuminating.

The Book had a three-fold errand, for the light, to the Jew, and to all the race. In the Jew the light would have a light holder, in close touch with the race.

The Jew nation would have the light for itself, to keep it true to its errand. The race would have the light held near its face, flooding in, clear, soft, strong.

For there was the true light, the real thing of light, that lighteth every man as he cometh into the world.

The Book was a photograph. The Jew nation was the camera. A Jew leader held the camera up to catch the light. Some One unseen guided the Jew leader as he held the camera. The race looked at the picture made.

A photograph is a writing made by light. The camera draws the light to a point where it makes a picture. Men look at the light written picture. They are affected by it, whether they will or not.

Willfully shut eyes made the need. The light got in, but dimly. It was blurred. Men blundered badly in their choosing. They were making bad choices, not good choices, wrong choices. These were mixed up with good choices, right choices.

The great need was to flood the clear light in men's faces everywhere, all the time, soft, clear, true, penetrating, illuminating.

So, they *could* see to choose right. This was the one thing, choosing right. Men would choose. They are always choosing. *The* thing was to help them choose right.

The Flooding Light.

And so the light flooded in. From creation's earliest dawn the light has flooded in. Eden

knew the full flood light of light shining clearly in open eyes. The Light himself was there. His presence was the fullest flood of clearest light.

That rarely gifted, richly empowered Eden man walked in the light. He walked with the Light. These two walked and talked and worked together in the Garden.

The Eden days were God's days. They were of his planning. They told his ideal for man, and the earth.

That man companioned intimately with God, gives at once the picture of purity that is native to man, as to God.

Then man was led up to the tree of choice. He could *stay* with God, by his own free choice, in the presence of temptation. So, he would come into yet more intimate touch. It would be intimate touch *through his own choice.*

There the break came. Man made the break. God suffered a heart-break. The highest power was used in the lowest way. The power of choice chose wrong.

At once the Garden gate was shut, that so man's own true garden home might be kept unsullied, for man's return and future use.

That break affected man's eyes. He shut them. Outside the Garden is the story of blinking, shutting, and shut eyes, sometimes tight shut. Man's vision blurred and blinded.

There was never any change in the light. This is notable, and without question. The light continued just the same as it had been in the Garden.

God has never left his world. He stays near every man, near enough to help, near that he may help. Yes, he came yet nearer, in Jesus.

Through a four-sided prism the light has shined, in all the earth, to all men, and to each man. Four sides there were to this unfailing prism, and are.

Through outer nature, through the inner light (usually called conscience), through outer circumstance (commonly called providence), and, *and* (tender touch!) through each babe coming into the world, the light shined, and shines.

For every babe is a fresh act of God. It's a new nearer speaking of the voice of God. It is the latest fresh shining of the light of the face of God.

For over a third the time since Eden's companionship this four-prism light shined, clear, soft, unmistakable, penetrating, illuminating. And so it still shines, over all the earth, wherever man is found, and wherever human hearts love.

But the eyes! Men's eyes! Ah! the bother's ever been there. They turned away. They blinked and narrowed. They shut, and shut tight, and shut stubbornly.

Not all; never all; some kept turned, and turning, toward the light. Eyes long used to the darkness, all around, by most intimate association, yet groped steadily along toward the light, and found it, with gladdened hearts.

The New Light Holder.

Then love added a fifth side to that prism. It made a new torch to carry the light. It made

a new torch bearer to hold the light torch up high and clear, where all might see.

The Light began shining through a new medium. It was a very practical medium. It could be touched, and handled, and held, and held tight.

The Jew nation was started. A book was started, *the* Book. The Jew nation started the Book. The nation was to preserve the Book, and to give it to all the race.

So the shining of the light would be intensified. It would make yet more clear, and definite, and clean-cut, the other four-fold shining of the light.

And, so, men's eyes would be helped. The blurring could clear, and would. The necessity of choosing would stand sharply out.

The Book would become a standard of light, to clear things up, in the thickened gloom of men's shut eyes, become darkly chronic.

The Jew nation was the light holder. It grew the Book, and preserved it, and gave it out to all the race. This was its mission, this and *more.*

That "more" stands boldly out. For through the Jew nation the Light himself would come. He would come yet closer, more intimately, into touch with man.

The light holder would hold the light up, high and clear. Then it would actually bring the Light himself in amongst us, as one of ourselves. Surely this would fix things up! That mission isn't done yet, according to the Book's own story.

2. The University of Arabia, where the Book was first whipped into shape

First course: actual experience: for the heart.

The Jew nation slowly gathered and grew. It started back in classical Ur, far down the Euphrates, with Abram. Slowly, sometimes painfully, but ever steadily, the human stuff grew, that some day would be the nation.

Four hundreds of years in the Nile land made it a nation, in numbers and separation. Then it was hotly welded into a nation in fact by the fierce fires of Egypt, and even more by the never forgotten getting out of Egypt.

Then it was sent to school. It was cut off for a time from all the race. In this it was being trained for its errand to all the race.

The school had an intensive course. It ran through a long forty full years. It was a real university, in the fine old meaning. It took in all there was from the beginning of things on up.

It took in the whole nation from primary on to postgraduate courses. The University of Arabia was a university in the full original sense, blended with the later meaning.

There were three main courses. There was actual personal experience. There was object teaching for the eye. And there was full detailed spoken instruction.

The actual experience came first. It was a most intensive course, brief, tense beyond words, compelling, never forgotten, literally unforgetable.

That smoking flaming Mount burned itself in deep, deep into their innermost consciousness. The burning fire-marks never came out.

That voice of thunder, distinctly heard by every one, speaking in their own mother tongue, in words every boy could understand, clear, vibrant, rang in their inner ears and memories. It could never be forgot.

Those simple, incisive, sentences cut the air as with a knife. They cut the meaning clean-cut into their brains. They cut the significance deep into their moral consciousness.

There were no positive prohibitions in Eden. For there were no existent evil practices. The nine positive prohibitions, in negatives, of Horeb, simply touch Egyptian practices, cursedly commonplace to every one listening.

The whole dramatic scene, with its tremendous beginnings, and its forty days' continuance, lasted vividly to the end of life.

Through all the sore difficulties of the desert, the undisciplined moral wobblings, the mutinous mutterings, and worse, of these strange journeyings, under all else, that actual personal experience was a sure anchorage.

And, too, be it keenly noted, this had come close on top of that other intense personal experience, that most dramatic climactic getting out of the Egypt furnace of slavery. The piling up beggars words.

These experiences were their initiation course in the university training of the Arabian Wilderness. It was the most profound, intensely profound, foundation of their training for a race

mission. The psychology is exquisite, and wholly effective.

Second Course: Object Teaching: For the Eye.

The second course was object teaching for the eye. And it appeals at once to the modern teacher instinct that they had a hand, a big hand, in making the object that carried the teaching.

That flaming Mount, and ringing Voice, those ten guiding words of positive instruction and gracious warning, all this was put into the richly tapestried Tent pitched in their very midst, topped with the Fire-Cloud.

The spoken teaching was acted out, in simple clear ritual, day in and day out, before their eyes, for a forty full years. Nothing could so burn in the truth in which they were being trained.

The Jehovah of the Red Sea, and the flaming Mount, and the ringing human Voice, was ever in their midst, through darkest night and sunniest rainless blue.

He spoke to their eyes, in the Pillar of Fire and Cloud. He spoke to their ears in the daily service of the tapestried Tent. He spoke to their hearts in their—absence from enslaving Egypt, their Red Sea gateway out into this rare freedom.

This was the second course in the University of Arabia. And this course was open to all, and was taken by all, regardless of age and of sex. From youngest to oldest, men and women alike, daily and nightly, took this course.

Third Course: Spoken Instruction: For the Mind.

The third course is of peculiar interest to us just now. For it was here that our Bible got its start.

It was the course in actual instruction, by word of mouth. It extended from the leaders of the tribes, down through the heads of the larger family groups, through the heads of smaller family groups, on and on, to each individual family.

There was a most remarkable, and minute, organization of the new nation, along tribal lines, and family lines. It may well be doubted if any nation has ever been so thoroughly organized as this Jew nation was.

The purpose of the organization was for administration, for military readiness, for sanitation, and clearly for instruction. The whole nation went to school, from youngest up, step by step, stage by stage, course after course.

3. The President-Teacher of the University, Who did the First Writing

Moses the Scholar.

At the head of this remarkable University of Arabia was Moses himself. He was its organizer. He was president, teacher, and author.

The Book of Exodus gives the account of his rare ability as an organizer, and administrator. The Book of Deuteronomy lets us see in graphic fashion his exceptional skill as a teacher.

He himself was a scholar, one of the whole world's greatest scholars and scientists. He had been trained to it from boyhood on.

He had been brought up at the most scholarly center history has known. He had every advantage of the most exceptional sort. He was learned in all the learning of that world center of research and learning.

He himself had had a most exceptional, post-graduate, individual, course in the University of the Desert, with the sheep and the stars, with the solitude of the wind-swept sands and—with God.

It was a course in proportions. And true scholarship is essentially a study, not of values simply, but of proportions. Much gotten in the University of the Nile had shifted its relative value. Clearer light shifted the proportions.

His rare literary ability is revealed in Job. Moses' own heart is revealed there too. For it is a study of life's acutest problem, human suffering.

That study had been beaten out, and beaten into shape, in fugitive exile, under the rainless blue, with the sheep, and the stars, in the solitude with God.

The Dominating Purpose.

Now, it becomes of intense interest to note the one big purpose in mind in all this university teaching. There was just one, only one, dominant and dominating purpose.

With a thousand important detailed items needing to be included, and carefully provided

for, yet one thing stood out. It was the bull's eye of the target. Everything aimed at it.

That one thing can be very simply stated. The sheer simplicity intensifies the emphasis. The people were to be told and taught *about God.*

Who he is, what he is like, how he acts, what he thinks of us men, whether we can know him, or have any real touch with him—this is the one thing ever aimed at.

This has been the most universal question of all life, everywhere, and always, and is. For man hungers for God. The inner tug up never ceases in every human being.

It tugs till there is an ache. And that ache is never eased nor gone till real touch is gotten, and kept.

The Egyptian Atmosphere.

These Jew millions had been breathing the moral air of Egypt for generations. It filled their lungs. It had become very breath of life to them.

And all this in spite of the tremendous Joseph reign, when Jehovah and the Jehovah worship were magnified. The true teaching was in their blood, for generations. The Egypt teaching was in their lungs.

Egypt was the throbbing center of action of the race. It was the world empire of its day. Egypt was a perfect religious and moral racial mirror.

And the reflection in the mirror was repulsive beyond words. Unnameable lust, wildest orgies

of dissipation, utter disregard of human rights in property and life, brazen violence, the dominance of sheer brute force, these were the cursed commonplace of the race.

And they came to a hideous climax and riot in Egypt. It was the logical outcome of the sort of gods they worshipped. Every man has a god. That's in the blood. And a man always grows like his god.

These Jew multitudes had been territorially separated from the Egyptians. But moral atmosphere laughs at territorial boundary lines, then, and ever since, and to-day.

All this gives the background of this old University of Arabia training curriculum. The one towering tense object in view was to give the people a picture of God.

It should be a clear warm true living picture. That picture vividly presented would come to dominate absolutely all their lives, and each life.

Once such a conception could be gotten in, and in deep, in imagination and will, personal conduct would radically change. For personal conduct changes only from within. So the nation would change. And this, be it most keenly noted, is the one overshadowing dominating object of this desert schooling, always in the near background.

The Actual Writing.

The actual making of the Book naturally grew out of those university training courses. The Book started there. In briefest shape, the inner

heart of the wilderness teaching is packed into these opening Books of the Bible.

It takes strength to condense intelligently and sympathetically. Weakness scatters. Strength condenses. The cream of the cream of two score teaching years is packed into briefest space, yet with warm color, and quick heart beat.

Twenty centuries are packed into four and a half scant leaves. One leaf of this, scant, is given to the creation story. Another leaf, scant, to the quick break in Eden and the results outside.

The full results of that break, including the Flood catastrophe and the Babel defiance, are put into two and a half leaves, scant measure. Clearly the aim is simply historical background for the main story being told.

The most vivid bit in this brief background is the warm personal picture of God. It hangs at the very front door of Genesis. By position, and rich colouring, it dominates the whole background. We'll pick up this thread in "The Early Story."

Then, the background in, the Genesis story picks up their ancestor Abraham, and traces the growing family line to Egypt, and in Egypt.

Exodus traces the long sore suffering in Egypt. The remarkable series of judgments on Egypt revealed the resistless power of the one true God.

Then comes that stupendous deliverance, their experiences at the Mount of Flame, and with the flame-topped Tent.

Leviticus tells of their approach to God in the Cloud-shadowed Tent. It is all pictured

teaching, of the simple truth of the Gospel of latter times. And this is the sole purpose.

There is nothing here not in the Gospel, and nothing in the Gospel not here. Though the presence of Christ in the Gospel story makes all more vivid and personally intense.

Numbers is the university book proper, with forty years almost, and a constantly shifting campus, the rainless blue overhead, and the clean shifting sands under foot.

Deuteronomy is a remarkable final review, with the longed for homeland in sight and touch, and a foretaste of the victory there.

It is clear, and becomes yet more clear, that the one dominant thing throughout is the warm living portrait of God.

Matchless in power, tender in personal devotion, chaste in purity, ever present in person with them for friendly intimacy, this is God, the one only God. Intimate touch with him makes men pure, strong, full grown, and so human.

And so the model for the whole Book is set. It is quite simple to understand that Joshua was the understudy of Moses, in editing, and continuing the writing, as well as in succeeding to the national leadership.

And his successors would continue the task, through successive generations. And all would be under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, through the normal use of human faculties.

Precious Manuscripts.

Moses, without question, would have access to

a wealth of carefully treasured material. That floating Ark contained precious documents and archives, most jealously guarded, and handed on, from father to son, through the family line.

The eldest son always had the primogeniture right of possession, invariable in the Orient. And the Bible is wholly an Oriental story. And Abraham came of the first-born line, through Shem, the first born of Noah.

The genealogical line is most painstakingly guarded and given in the record. Through Joseph the Great, and on to Aaron the elder brother of Moses, these treasured records, reckoned more precious than gold or any earthly possession, were personally passed from father to first-born son.

The Pervading Presence.

And over all, and in all, pervading as subtly as an atmosphere, was the gracious supervision and guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in these men who do the writing.

He would guide in selection of material, in stimulating memory, in inspiring conceptions and ideals, in actually speaking the words written down sometimes, in opening the spirit eyes to see into the future, in guarding against error.

Always the personal characteristics of the writer are there in full action. The words used, the outlook on common life, the limitations of the man himself, these naturally give colouring. Through these the Holy Spirit moved and controlled.

Need Ever in Control.

Need is the dominating thing in all life. It controls us men. Need sends us men to our knees, actually knees, and spirit knees.

The knees insistently woo our brains to think, our hands to do, our feet to go, or to stand steady.

Need controls God, *our* need. It controlled Jesus, in Nazareth and the Wilderness, through the action years, in Gethsemane, on Calvary, and out of that new-hewn tomb.

It controls him now as he "ever liveth." It will control his next direct step, likely very soon, now.

Need brought forth this Book. It was conceived in the womb of need. It was born in an hour of sorest need. It grew through successive needs to its present size.

It was brooded over in its borning, and into its full growth, by the mother-hearted Holy Spirit. He still breathes on and in and through its pages to meet our needs to-day.

A very homely incident out of life fits in here. It was told me, by the minister concerned, out of his own experience. He was pastor of a church in the peninsula of Upper Michigan. It was a mining town up where the great copper deposits are.

The manager of a large mining corporation there was an unusually strong man. He was a university man, and kept well up on the common currents of intellectual life. His library table had the latest books and magazines.

And he had a decidedly sceptical turn, re-

ligiously, though he had had a Christian mother and a careful Christian training. But he was critical of the church, and everything of that sort.

The minister told me how he had repeatedly tried to get in touch, as tactfully as he could. But the man always rebuffed him, courteously, even genially, but decidedly.

One evening this man came to the church, when the officials were in session there, and asked to be received in the membership.

And, in response to the questions asked, he gave a simple clear full statement of his personal faith in Christ as his Saviour, and his purpose to confess him openly. And the necessary steps were taken by the officiary. Then the minister tactfully said, "You must know how surprised, as well as rejoiced, we are at this reversal of your position. Would you mind telling us what has made such a radical change?"

And very quietly the man replied, "Yes, I'll tell you. It was Uncle Jerry."

This Uncle Jerry was the mine carpenter. He was a Scotchman, a little past middle life, very quiet, a very reliable workman, and an earnest Christian, a member of this church. Everybody there knew Uncle Jerry well.

Astonished, the minister blurted out, "Uncle Jerry! What did Uncle Jerry do?"

And in the same quiet voice the engineer-manager of the big mining corporation said, "He didn't do a thing. *He lived it.*"

Here was a new book, a new sort of book. The university-bred engineer-manager has been

reading it, day after day, week in and week out. He knew all the other books on Christian evidences. They didn't touch him. He felt he had an answer.

But this book, the book of a life, actually lived in the common give-and-take of common life, this was something different, something unanswerable. It was more, there was a warm human touch in it.

And this sceptic was honest. One fact fixes a law of action. He got the one fact, a man who lived the Christian life. He needed a book, a human book, a book *lived*. He got it. The need was met.

If there might be more books of this sort. That's the best kind of commentary on the one Book.

II

THE STORY THE BIBLE TELLS; THE STORY OF FREE CHOICE, GOD'S PATIENCE, AND THE FINAL VICTORY

1. The Early Story and the Racial Breakdown

The Story: Genesis 1: 1–11: 9

A Portrait of God.

The second most attractive thing in all the world is a portrait, a picture in rich warm living colours of a person. The very most attractive thing is the person himself.

And if the portrait be a means of acquaintance with the person portrayed, and then of intimate friendship, it has achieved the highest purpose.

Every one loves a portrait. Nothing on canvas or paper equals the attraction of a person, a human, his face.

When a man or woman has done some notable thing we always want to see his picture, his face. What does he look like?

This leads straight to the beginning of "The Early Story." It is intensely human. It appeals to this commonest human longing for a picture.

For the Story opens with a picture. It's a portrait of God. We men are intensely interested in a portrait of God. He's our Kinsman. We are in his likeness. No tie is so strong as the family tie.

The Book itself opens with a portrait. It's a portrait of God. It is done in warmest human colouring. He is in action.

And so, in action, he is seen as his true self. It proves to be strongest and tenderest action. It reveals both mind and power and innermost heart.

And then, quickly, by its side there is hung another portrait, a double portrait, a family portrait. It is God and man, side by side, in action together.

This Early Story in the Book is really fascinating. It is very short. Yet it tells so much. A third of the history of the race (not the earth), according to the Book's own reckoning, is packed into less than five small leaves of paper.

It is plainly put in as *background* for the whole picture the Book portrays. Yet each bit stands out, clear and full, with distinct colour. There's no hurry, and no blurring.

Seven Items.

There are just seven outstanding distinct bits, covering two millenniums of years, packed into four leaves and a half of paper, in the story being told. The Creation Story tells God's ideal for man.[1] The Break tells the tragedy of free choice, the origin of all evil.[2] Cain's killing of

[1] Genesis 1–2. [2] Genesis 3.

his brother, and the Cain Line reveal willful stubborn sin—an outcast in the earth.[1]

The new Seth Line lets us see a moral dead level, with two glory-tipped mountain peaks, Enoch and Noah.[2]

Then the page seems to sob as it tells of the Fatal Forbidden Crossing of the two racial lines. It reveals free choice at its worst choosing. Things go morally rotten, the story actually says, in so many words.[3]

Then, following long decades of patient pleading, contemptuously ignored and laughed at, comes the heroic painful Flood, salvaging the race in spite of itself.[4] And the strange Tower of Babel move reveals a fresh hardening of the spirit of utter defiance of God, with the language break, and the scattering. Free choice is at a new worst.[5]

The two things that stand boldly, bluntly, out, are the portrait of God in creation and in Eden, and man's break with God.

God's part takes one leaf, and man's break the other three leaves and a little more. Though God's gracious patient wooing continues throughout.

Now, in this quick look at the Early Story of the Race, let us follow the plan of the Book and take a good look at this rare portrait of God in action, and at the double portrait of God and man together before the Break came.

This story of creation is a most prosaic re-

[1] Genesis 4. [2] Genesis 5.
[3] Genesis 6: 1–12. [4] Genesis 6: 13–9: 19.
[5] Genesis 9: 20–11: 9.

cital of events. The Bible throughout is full of rare poetical imagery. But this creation story is sheerest prose.

The Creation Story.

The story of the creation itself is told in ten words in the English.[1] There is neither calendar nor chronology.

Then there follows a simple graphic description of a catastrophe, sweeping and absolute.[2] And then, as simply, follows the recital of a six-days re-shaping or restoring of the earth for a new occupancy.[3]

Light breaks again through the darkness enshrouding the earth.[4] A vaporous atmosphere envelops the earth.[5] The waters covering the earth are withdrawn within fixed limitations,[6] and so the land is cleared, and plant life begins.[7]

Then light holders are appointed for the immediate needs of plant life. There must be successive alternation of seed time, growing time, harvest, and rest time, before the plant rhythm begins its round again. The light holders ensure this, as well as the daily change of day and night.[8] The yearly rhythm of seasons has four dividing points, the two equal-day-and-night points, and the other two of least light and of most, the shortest and the longest day.

This rhythm of light is adapted to the needed four-fold yearly rhythm of life. Our common

1 Genesis 1: 1. 2 Genesis 1: 2, 1st and 2nd clauses.
3 Genesis 1: 2, last clause to end of chapter.
4 Genesis 1: 3–5. 5 Genesis 1: 6–8.
6 Genesis 1: 9–10. 7 Genesis 1: 11–13.
8 Genesis 1: 14–19.

words now are spring, summer, autumn and winter. But these words make us think of variations of temperature, not necessarily included, originally, in all probability.

Then comes the creation of animal life. There is a law of growth, steady, upward, in the creation of animal life. It reveals a *principle* of growth upward.

It tells too of a Personality, back of the principle, the Creator, successively building up the lower animal world from lowest up, until finally the climax man is reached.

The likeness in the physical make-up of different species does not necessarily imply an evolution from the lower up, crossing the line of species, as has been so commonly supposed.

It rather indicates that the Creator, in making each higher form, had added something, had gone a step further, and so on, up and up. Care is taken to tell nine times that there is no crossing of species.

It becomes intensely interesting to find that the *order* of growth upward in this Genesis creation story, is identical with what comparative anatomy finds in actual life.

It is indicated in the amount of gray brain matter proportioned to the spinal column. From lowest to highest form, this runs the scale of fishes, reptiles (water animals, amphibians), birds, mammals, man. So it is in life, and so it is in this creation story.

God's Masterpiece.

When all was ready for him man was created.

The Book quietly, boldly, says that man was created by a direct act of God, and we are concerned just now with the story of the Book.

God made man like himself, following the same father-mother instinct which is a bit of the likeness of God in us. So these two, God and man, could have real fellowship of spirit and understanding and ideals, and only so.

God expected to enjoy man and have fellowship with him, even as man with God himself. And they did, and they do.

There are four things in which man is different from the lower creation. In reasoning power, in the power to express his thoughts in language, in the innate moral sense of right, and in the power of moral choice.

Plainly these could only have come from above, from God. They are a bit of the image. And, further, deeper yet, man is like God in that he is a spirit, an undying spirit.

There are three things in which man is linked with the Creator and the whole creation. He is a spirit, and so is kin to God.

He has a body, and so is kin to the animal world. His body was made out of the dust of the earth, and so he has kinship with the earth.

He is linked *up* with God, through his spirit; and *down* with the animal world, and with the earth, through his body. He is indeed fitted to be God's under-master of all creation.

The Accurate Reading of Genesis One.

For a generation of years I have been studying, critically and prayerfully, the underneath

text of this creation story. And at length I have made the following free translation of it. Yet, while free, it is at least strictly true to the Hebrew text and thought.

Here, in simple every-day English, is the story told in that first page of Genesis:

In the beginning God created, out of nothing, the vast limitless swing of the starry universe, *and* this little planet called the earth. (And now the story swings to the earth, and so continues.)

And this earth had become a ruined waste, and without any inhabitant. It was now covered over with a riotous mass of wild raging waters, and was densely shrouded in utter darkness.

And now the Spirit of God brooded, mother-like, tremulous with love, instinct with life, upon the surface of the waste of waters.

And God said, Let light come again to the earth. And the light, which had been hidden from the darkened earth, broke through the shrouding darkness, and shone clear and bright upon the earth again.

And God took notice of the light, coming in again, that it fitted well into the purpose in his mind for the ruined earth.

And God made a distinction between the part of the earth where the light shone, and that part turned away from the light where it was still dark.

And God called it day time where the light shined. And the part where it was not shining he called night time.

And the length of time that elapsed from the declining light through the darkness of the night time, until the light shined fully again, he called that of day, the first day.

The Atmosphere.

And God said, Let there be a spreading out expanse in the very midst of these waters. And let it divide between this great mass of clouds and fog and mist that is hovering around the earth, *from* the vast waters raging on the surface of the earth.

And God made a vast expansive space surrounding the earth, full of these clouds and moisture. And he made a distinction between this cloudy space, full of vapours and moisture, *and* the mass of waters underneath that covered the earth. And so this distinction was clearly made.

And God called this vast stretched out space or atmosphere, this sphere of vapour, he gave it the name of the skies or the heavens. And the evening, and night time, and morning up to the full shining of the light, that had now elapsed he called a second day.

Plant Life.

And God said, Let these waters, now covering the surface of the earth, be gathered together in one place, here and there, and let the land underneath appear and be dry. And so it was.

And God made a distinction between this dry land, and the part where the waters were gathered together. The dry land he called the earth, and the waters he called the seas. And God

noted carefully that this fitted into the purpose he was working out.

And God said, Let the dry part called the earth germinate or sprout forth, all sorts of vegetables and green growing things, out of the soil, each kind containing its own seed;

And all sorts of fruit trees, each kind bearing its own sort of fruit, and each containing its own seed, upon all the earth.

And so it was. At once, all sorts of green growing things began growing up out of the earth, each particular kind bearing its own kind of seed; and all sorts of fruit trees, each particular sort bearing its own sort of seed.

And God noted carefully that this too fitted into the purpose in his heart for the renewed earth. And the time that had now run from the declining light, through the darkness, until the light came fully again to that part of the earth, he called this a third day.

Light Holders.

And God said, Let there be light holders (or light reservoirs) in the expanse of the heavens, to distinguish the day from the night; and let them indicate or mark out the (four) *seasons* (by the two equinoxes—equal day and night—and by the longest day and the shortest);

And the *days* (by the turning of the earth on its axis); and the *years* (by the movement of the earth around the sun). And let them be four light centers (or light holders) in the expanse of the heavens to give light down upon the earth.

And God made ready the two great light centers (or light holders); the greater light center to reign over the day, and the lesser one to reign over the night, with the stars also.

And God appointed these, in the expanse of the heavens, to give light down upon the earth, and to reign over the day and over the night, and to distinguish the light from the darkness.

And God noted thoughtfully that this was suited to serve the purpose in his mind for the new life upon the earth.

And the rhythm of time that had now run on from the declining sunlight until the light came again to its full, he called this a fourth day.

Water and Air Neighbours.

And God said, Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures; and let birds fly in the open expanse of the heavens.

And God created out of nothing great sea monsters, and every living creature that moveth, wherewith the waters swarm, each after its kind; and every winged bird after its kind. And God noted that all this fitted well into his plan for things.

And God blessed these living creatures. He said to the fish of the waters, and to the birds of the air, Breed, and breed abundantly, and let the waters in the sea be full of your kin and your kind, and also let the birds of the air breed in great numbers.

And the rhythm of time from the declining sunlight till it came again to its full, had now run into a fifth day.

The Crown of Creation.

And God said, Now let the earth bring forth and breed living creatures, each after its kind, that is, all sorts of domestic cattle, and all the other smaller animals; and the roving beasts of the earth, each after its own kind.

And it was so. And God made the roving beasts of the earth after their kind, and all domestic cattle after their kind, and every smaller animal that moveth on the ground, each after its kind. And God noted that this, too, fitted in well with the plan he was working out.

And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our very own likeness; and let man be the undermaster over all creation.

And so God created man in his own image; in the very image of God himself created he him; male and female created he them.

And God bowed down over man in tender fatherly motherly love. He breathed a blessing upon them. And God said unto them, I herewith give you creative power to be fruitful and increase;

And to have the mastery over the whole earth, by filling it up with your abundant descendants. And I now give you the mastery over all creation, over the birds of the heavens and every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

And God said, See, note thoughtfully, I give you every green growing thing, bearing its seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, it is all yours freely for food.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every

bird of the heavens, and to every animal that goeth upon the earth, I have given every green growing thing for food. And so it was.

And the rhythm of time from declining sunlight up to the next full shining of the light was the sixth day.

The Hallowed Rest Day.

And so the skies or heavens, and the earth, were finished, and all the host in and on the earth. And on the seventh day God had finished up all his work which he had made.

And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God put a special blessing, even a hallowing touch, upon the seventh day. Because that in it he rested after all his work which God created and made.

So runs the story of the first of Genesis.

From this point on, the narrative in chapter two of Genesis follows the common teaching principle of repetition with further information to round out the story. The heavy mists rising from the newly cleared land on the third day was the beginning of the rain process, essential to the plant life about to begin.

The Eden Garden.

Then the narrative turns to man, and his garden home, and its location. God talks with man in the garden. The homely, appealingly human picture of God here tells how he talked in a quiet simple fatherly way. Day by day, bit by bit, God talked with this first man, instructing and explaining.

Now, it will be most interesting to look a little closely at this double portrait, God and man together, in the Garden. It was a remarkable training school in that garden.

Man was to be the undermaster of creation. His was the princely task of subduing and cultivating it, and of being master of all its forces. God would naturally tell this newly created man about the earth, the solar system of which it was part, the sequences or laws of nature in action, and man's part in it. A thoughtful wise father easily thinks into how he would talk with his grown son under such circumstances.

God asked Adam not to eat of a certain tree, simply that by not eating, when he was quite free to, he would be choosing to do as God wished.

In that way he would be using his power of free choice to keep in touch with God. And so there would come knowledge of the good he had chosen to do by keeping in touch with God, and of the evil, through breaking with God, he chose to refuse.

So he would actually be eating of the Tree of Life, that is, fullness of life. He would be coming into closer touch with God through his own act. Two trees are pointed out. Both are trees of choice, one gave the *opportunity* to choose; the other the *privilege* enjoyed through the right choice.

Eve's Coming.

Then comes the Eve part of the story. There is exquisite training in preparation for the com-

ing of Eve. It is in the naming of the lower animals. It may have run through several days.

As the lower creation passes in review, and each sort is named, the longing for a mate, a complemental self, grows and intensifies in Adam. Every one has his mate. That is the one thing burned in. He alone has not.

The sweet fellowship, the God-like power of actually creating new life in each one's own likeness, this before his eyes, gradually, increasingly, this makes a tremendous impression on Adam.

Through all this there is an awakening into consciousness, and an intensifying in Adam, of two traits, the hunger for companionship with one of his own kind, *and* the father trait. Both traits are part of the image of God.

The result is an intense longing for a companion. The inexpressibly intense desire for Eve came before Eve came. Then Eve comes. Instantly one recognizes the basic principle involved in the distinctive manner of Eve's creation.

Man was made of the dust. Eve was made out of Adam *after* God had breathed upon him. She had been in him. All the traits and qualities that make women distinctive had been in Adam.

Now, all that man was is in the two. The two together make the human being. She was a part of himself, and is, in a true mating. He found in her the other part of himself.

By no other imaginable method of action could such perfect union of two persons be gotten.

And it called for the supernatural touch. Three distinct times the supernatural touch has come, in the creation of the earth, of Adam, and of Eve.

And now there is the God-like, God-given, power of recreating new life, in their own image, in coöperation with God. There is no higher power, nor expression of life, than this, either in God or in man.

The parts of the body concerned with creative power have a double function; a daily excretory function, and an occasional creative function. The daily use keeps the parts fit for the occasional use.

It will be quickly recognized that here is the tightly cemented cornerstone of the integrity of the family. And the family is the cornerstone of the integrity of the race.

Two things lie at the heart of the sacredness of the family, and so, in turn, of the integrity of the race.

First comes the strength of the attachment between husband and wife, that withstands all the wear and tear of daily life, with the subtle hurt of sin everywhere.

True love will not only withstand all subtle attempts at unravelling and breaking, but actually grow deeper and stronger in the strife against these adverse influences.

The second is the purity of the relations between the two. The distinctive powers and functions in each, of the relationship, are held sacred to this true holy purpose.

The chief attack, terrific in intensity, has been

against these two things. And these are the two things that stand out in this early Eden picture.

The continuance and growth of the race depends on the family. The physical and mental and moral integrity of the race depends on the sacred purity of the family. The family depends on the relation between man and woman, husband and wife.

The growth of the child, from babyhood to maturity, depends on the full intelligent touch of strong love between father and mother. No child has its full heritage except where there is full unselfish affection, unselfishly continued, and ever maturing between these two, utterly regardless of difficulties.

Adam and Eve Together.

And now Adam and Eve are left alone. They would be absorbed with each other. And, *and*, as the full realization grew upon them, they would be absorbed with a tender reverential love for God.

That rare Eden man now had a comrade, his equal in every regard. He needed her, as she him, to make a complete human being, to get the full enjoyment in life, and to fill out to the full his, their, one mission in life.

Obedience would be the mutual rhythm of love, he obedient to her every need, she obedient in action to his leadership, in whatever plan had been mutually agreed upon.

Nothing is so pure as love. Nothing so searches into the recesses of the consciousness for anything there that is not pure. Nothing is

so humble as love, and nothing makes so truly humble. There is a sensitiveness about keeping the relationship really true, and this controls one's thought and action.

Nothing is so tenderly reverential as love, with a fine reserve in its tenderness. There's an innate inbred reverence in man for woman, and for her person, and in woman for man. This is true even yet, in spite of the dire hurt of sin.

These two recognize the power entrusted to them. They could repeat, with new meaning, God's word "Let us make." The thoughtful union of their creative power, the thoughtful eager watching for the maturing of that marvellous creative power, this was now a holy possibility entrusted to them.

The true understanding of their relation, and the purity of their thought, is put into a very expressive sentence. They were both unclad, with the common clothing of afterwards and since. And their understanding of their relationship was so true and pure that no thought of any impropriety came into their minds. There was none.

We have read something into that word "naked," used here in the King James' version, not originally there. It is something grown up in a totally different moral atmosphere. Nothing could be farther from a true understanding than any such thought as savagery.

These two are really clad, in a way quite lost to us. The inner shapes the outer. Character dominates face and form absolutely. One's thought influences his body most radically.

The inner spirit yet more profoundly pervades face and form and action. This would, of course, be more marked when things were in their virgin strength and purity.

The skin of Moses' face shone as he came down from being face to face with God. It was without doubt something *within* Moses that changed the look of his face. That intimacy of touch for forty successive days, twice, must have had a profound effect upon his inner character.

Stephen was so under the sway of the Jesus passion burning within, and of his own intense moral purpose, that man's eyes were caught and gripped by the change in his face. It shone, like an angel's. That would mean a soft clear transfiguring light from *within.*

Christ on the Mount was transfigured, changed from *within,* until his face was like the sun. And his garments could not conceal that the soft dazzling radiance of light was all over his person. He, of course, is distinctly exceptional. In each instance, without question, it was something *within* that gave that outer appearance.

God is spoken of as covering himself "with light as with a garment." The language indicates a glow of radiant light shining out from *within,* and enveloping the person even as a garment would.

It seems most positively probable, that this couple, fresh from the hand of God, devoid of the common clothing of afterwards, were yet clad with light. An exquisitely soft idealizing haze of indescribable light enveloped their persons.

The whole probability, to the degree of moral certainty, is, that as Adam and Eve met, and then were alone together, there was a rare beauty of face and form, a fine unconscious dignity of presence and carriage, an exquisite grace of pose, and more, and that a soft light radiated from their persons.

Here then is this early Eden life. A normally developed man, fresh from the hand of God, with a mated companion at his side, in simple touch of heart with God, all personal needs provided for, with a worthy task absorbing his attention and calling out the best in him, and with leisure to think and enjoy life.

The Eden Flood Light.

And now comes the climax. Man was to have his opportunity, an opportunity to choose. This was God's best. The two Trees of Choice had been carefully pointed out, the tree of moral knowledge through choice, the tree of fullness of life through right choice.

The one thing above all else in God is character, what he is in himself. The one thing above all else in man is character, what he is in himself.

Character is made by choice. God could not give man character. Character can be gotten only through choice. Man could be made innocent, but he couldn't be made virtuous. Virtue is the fruit of free choice rightly made.

With the opportunity went plain talk about the danger, the grave moral danger, lying close to that rare power of free choice.

There were no "don'ts," no "Thou-shalt-nots." These came later, when the whole moral surroundings were so densely crowded with positive outright bad acts and habits and customs.

It is striking to note that all moral conduct in common life comes under three heads, relation with others, speech, and property rights.

One's relation with others controls both speech and property rights. True relation with God controls one's relation with all others, superiors, equals, and supposedly inferiors.

If one keep true in his relation to another, he will not say an untrue thing about him, nor disturb him nor his property rights.

Here is the one fundamental principle (true relation with God) underlying the Ten ethical Commands at Horeb. Those commands touch these three things in a detailed defined way, and they add nothing not here.

It is most significant that the moral flood light of right conduct is in that Eden companionship between God and man. Those Ten Horeb Words were written in Adam's inner spirit, and are written in every man's since.

There, in the Garden, was the real thing of light, the Light himself, lighting this Eden man, even as it (he) has lighted every man as he comes into the world.

That Portrait Close Up.

Let us take another look at that portrait of God in action on that great first page of Genesis. For this is the big thing in the Book.

It is the big thing in Eden at the start. It is

the thing in personal life, getting a clear, close-up, warm, portrait of God.

It should be carefully noted that this portrait stands in contrast, and in likeness. It stands in sharpest contrast with the gods of Egypt and of all the race, at the time this gracious Genesis portrait was limned. And it answers in likeness to the God the human heart longs for. And that itself is most significant.

There are six features in this portrait, traced in action, on that creative page. God is *a person.* He thinks and plans. He talks and acts. He loves, and gives himself out to you, and gives himself with you. One recognizes himself in such a God. The likeness takes hold of one's heart.

God is *intelligent.* He could think out the whole plan of a universe, and a home earth, and a man like himself upon it.

God is *wise.* He could adapt the plan he thought out to the needs of man and of life. God is *powerful.* He actually could make the whole thing a living bright reality by a mere word.

God is *pure.* There's a reverence in nature, where unhurt by man's touch. Here each bears and begets after its kind, and only so. There is no crossing of species.

Then the sixth word takes hold of the human heart in a very homely close-up way. He is loving? No; that's too tame. He is *love.* He is love in action. He could, and he *did,* he actually did.

God is love. Intelligence, wisdom, power,

purity, in action, and all embodied in a person, and all for us, for me, this is what love is.

Then there is an added touch to the portrait. It's a tender warm heart touch. He gave his own self, in personal touch, to meet a very sore need. This comes out in one word.

It is the word "moved" in the King James' version. "The Spirit of God *moved* on the riotous waste of waters."

Dig in under that English word "moved" here, and you find a tender heart beat. It is a *mother* word.

Listen: He "was *brooding,* tremulous with love, instinct with mother life, on the waste of the waters." When things had gone bad, and worse, and worst, he gave himself to heal the hurt, and make things right again.

That is love at its best and most. That is the portrait of God, hung up at the very front door, of this sacred old Book.

Now, a quick look back, at these scant leaves of paper, and these two millenniums of time, makes two things stand out, and stand out big. They are *the* two things.

First of all, is that rare gift of free choice, given man at the start, and respected to the utmost, by God, throughout.

The second thing is man's use of it. In the main it's a weak, positively bad, use. It leads to the breakdown recorded here. It's a moral breakdown, and then a material. That is always the order in life.

Is it not a winsome story, even when it is heartbreaking?

The Companion Story in the Rocks

The Common Law of Probability.

In this early story of the race the biggest fact standing out, sheer and gaunt, is the *Flood.* The Book speaks plainly and positively about a flood, that radically changed all life on the earth.

It is very striking that there is another angle to the story of the flood. And that is the record of it found in the surface of the earth.

If there really were such a flood as the Book speaks of, it would, without any question, leave deep, tell-tale marks on the earth itself. Let us look a little at this.

A simple word about the law of chances, or, what is commonly called *the law of probability,* will help a little here.

If one has not thought into it much, it comes as a distinct surprise to be told that this is one of the commonest, and one of the most practical, laws of common practical life.

This common law of probability comes in here, as in all life. You say about something, that it is likely so and so, *or,* it likely will be so and so.

That is the meaning of *probability.* And probability is one of the three commonest laws of life. The other two are imitation and habit.

It is probable, to the point of practical certainty, that all the actions of human life are controlled by this law of probability.

The probability may be only a presuming that a thing is likely. And you might not risk anything much on that. *Or,* the thing may be probable up to the point of moral or practical cer-

tainty. And, actually, all life moves forward on that level.

The law courts have certain rules and precedents which decide what they will accept as proof, legally.

But, practically, nothing can be proven out and out. The exception is the mathematical demonstration. And in every-day affairs the mathematical demonstration has little, if any, practical worth. It is of value chiefly as a means of disciplining one's mental powers.

We know, absolutely, by experience, certain things, but we could never prove them to another. The most we could do would be making clear that it was *probably* so, up to the point of moral or practical certainty.

It is a fact, a striking indisputable fact, that all life everywhere rests wholly on the basis of probability. Certain things or facts being known it is probable that certain other things will happen. The vast fabric of commercial life is built upon such supposition.

The life insurance companies, involving billions of dollars and pounds sterling, are controlled entirely by the findings of experts in the law of probability as applied to length of life.

The farmer, the breeder, the merchant and banker, the educator and the statesman, the physician and surgeon, each stakes all his decisions and actions absolutely on this law of probability.

Even science pays full homage here. Science is a matter of orderly knowledge. Yet it is astonishing how much science *doesn't know.*

What is gravitation? Science doesn't know. Nobody knows. Einstein has put a wholly new angle on Newton's law of gravitation, as to how it acts. But, we do know practically how it affects things, and we explain and adjust life accordingly.

What is electricity? Nobody knows. Certain processes of action can be described, but what the force itself is remains unknown. But we know enough to flood our factories with mechanical power, our houses with light and warmth, and even our food boxes with icy cold.

We do know that if we do certain things certain results, we very much want, will in all probability, to the point of moral certainty, happen.

Yet, every now and then, there's a break. A Mississippi flood knocks out all probability of cotton and corn harvests, and so the necessities and comforts of life, for many millions.

A slip in judgment, or somebody's moral slip, may shut the bank doors to the clamouring crowds, who want their hard earned money. The probability reckoned on has failed.

But, happily, that's the rare exception in the whole run of things. Such exception makes the law of probability stand out more sharply as a common law of life.

Now, there are three things that are absolute essentials in the practical working of this common law of probability. Whether it's a bank handling your money, or a surgeon examining for a possible operation;

Or, the physician examining for life insurance,

or the scientist delving into biology or geology or chemistry, or the scholar studying the old manuscript, or what not, without limit, these three things must come in.

The outcome depends wholly upon these three things. And there is no exception whatever here. These three things are, accurate observation, trained poised judgment, and utter impartiality personally as to the conclusions reached. These are personal traits in the one that must report his conclusions.

The Planet's Flood Story.

Now, what does this common law of probability tell us about this old tremendous story of the Flood? The Flood is commonly discredited today. Yet the Book of God speaks with a decided positiveness about it.

There are two facts that stand sharply out about the Flood in the Story of the Book. There was a civilization before the Flood. It overspread the whole earth. It was on a high level, indeed starting on the highest imaginable level.

It was utterly wiped out by a flood of waters, both the waters of the heavens, and the waters of the sea, breaking over their limitations. Then a new start was made. In brief, that's the Story of the Book.

Now, turn to the companion story of the rocks. Geology has studied the surface of our earth, clear around the planet. In the standard scholarly authorities in geology certain things stand out as settled facts.

One of these facts is regarding the conditions

of the *surface* of the earth. Its present condition is not ideal, indeed far from ideal. It presents the strange condition of *ocean bottoms*, even far inland, with remnants of ocean life. This is so over all the earth.

It presents, too, a *washed* condition, an appearance as though vast tides might have swept back and forth over it at some time.

Further, there is found an alternation of deposits of various kinds of soil. And these alternations are repeated, many times, in some parts, layer upon layer of different soils, as though put there by *successive* tidal movements.

Then there are what these geological experts call "relic seas." The Caspian Sea is the striking illustration. It is wholly unconnected with the ocean. Yet, it is clear that there had been such connections, in the not remote past. For there is found there animal life, and chemical salts, such as are common and characteristic in the ocean.

Then there are other seas only partially connected with the ocean. That is, there are barriers, blocking the free flow of water, to and from the ocean. The Polar regions are constantly sending out currents of icy cold water.

Yet, the water of these seas is warmer (except on the surface affected by the present outer ocean temperature) than the ocean waters.

This is true commonly of such widely separated seas as the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Inland Sea of Japan.

It suggests that there probably was at one time a common temperature to all the water

bodies of the earth, and if so, distinctly warmer than the ocean waters at present. So these geological experts think.

In addition to these, there are found deep depressions in the earth's surface, which give plain evidence of having once been filled with water, but now are not.

These are some of the facts regarding the condition of the *surface* of the earth. And it is striking that these conditions are found in all parts of the earth, actually earth-wide.

The Fossils Story.

Then, there is a group of facts about preserved remnants of former plant and animal life, found embedded in the earth. These are called fossils, that is dug up things.

These fossils are found everywhere. Remnants of *sea* life are found far *inland,* and often high up on some mountain side.

A fossil is a well preserved remains of some animal or plant, *or* the impression these have left on soil and rock.

The vast coal and oil and gas deposits owe their origin wholly to former vegetable and animal life, buried, under immense pressure.

The *preservation* of these fossils is remarkable. It is due to their being buried wholly *under water;* otherwise they would have disintegrated, and been absorbed in the soil.

The *quality* of these fossil remains is most striking and significant. They are invariably larger and superior to animal and plant life now on the globe. By comparison they plainly in-

dicate the marked deterioration of the world we live in.

The *quantity* of these fossil deposits is as notable. It is simply immense, as compared with present conditions. These fossils make clear that the present is an "impoverished world," regarding animal and plant life.

Further, these geological authorities say, it is clear that the upheaval of all the mountain ranges of the earth must have taken place *since the burial of these fossils.*

Still further, these fossils plainly reveal an ideal world as regards *climate.* It is what we think of as a warm springlike climate, over all the earth, and throughout the entire year.

Fossils that belong to tropical conditions are found, for instance, in Northern Siberia, almost the coldest spot on the face of the earth.

Such an ideal climate would indicate an ideal distribution of land and water, with currents of warm water flowing constantly from the equator toward the poles, equalizing temperature of both water and air. The atmosphere would be peculiarly wholesome, with a regularity of moisture in all parts.

Then it is quite plain that there came some change. That change was radical. It was sudden. It came through water action. It was simultaneous in all parts of the earth. It became permanent. It was tremendous beyond imagination.

The geological authorities point out that the *only adequate cause* for such a change would be a jar or shock upon the earth *from outside.*

It would be a shock sufficient to shatter utterly, that is, to dislocate or disarrange, the surface of the earth quite beyond description.

Such a shock would produce abnormal tidal action of the waters of the ocean. Great tidal waves would sweep around the earth, from east to west, travelling at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, at the equator.

One authority estimates that, with all the factors involved, such a tidal movement around the earth would reach a maximum of about six miles in height at the equator, every one hundred and fifty days.

Of course, the equilibrium existing between land and water would be destroyed. And with this the climate, dependent on that equilibrium, would be radically changed, *and*, automatically, plant and animal life would be wiped out.

A Top Running Down.

Another fact pointed out is about the *shape* of the earth, and its *motion* in space. The earth is not a perfect sphere, as would seem the natural thing.

It is bigger around the middle, the equator, by some twenty-seven miles; and it is flattened out at the two ends, the poles.

The *motion* of the earth around the sun is an unexplained puzzle. It would seem the natural thing for it to swing in a circle, held evenly in space by the attraction of the sun.

But it doesn't. It has a wobbling movement. It moves in an ellipse. There is not one central focus, but two. The sun is one focus. There is

clearly another. What? No one knows. No one has been able to find out.

It is a strange fact that the earth wobbles in its rotation, like a spinned top, running down, but never fully run down. It is held just there. How? The scientists can find no answer.

Reverent faith thinks it can understand. But, of course, this is outside the range of science, actual knowledge through eye and touch.

Clearly there is some not-understood force in action there, overcoming to a certain extent the full force of the sun's attraction.

The result is a strangely inclined position and movement in space, away from the circle. And this is maintained constantly.

It is this leaning away from the sun that causes the opposite season in the northern and southern hemispheres. Their winter is our summer time, their summer our winter.

The thing can't be explained, or hasn't been, so far, by the scientists. It is the last thing one would look for in a natural world. But there it is.

The conclusion reached, by geologists of outstanding reputation, is, that there must have been some sort of a catastrophe, of the character of a vast movement of water, since man and other life first appeared upon the earth.

This was the common view among scientists, until the new atheism of recent decades began stressing the age-old teaching of organic evolution to explain life on the earth.

Now, there are three conclusions that have been drawn from all this. First is this: There

was an earlier civilization on this earth. It was vastly greater in quantity, and superior in quality, to the present civilization.

The second item: There occurred some stupendous catastrophe, in which water was the biggest factor. It completely blotted out that civilization, and changed the whole surface of the earth. The third item: The present civilization of the earth is distinctly inferior in every regard.

This is the *Companion Story of the Rocks*, as dug out by the geologists, through long generations of observation and study.

A Salvage Measure.

And, now, we turn to the Story of the Flood, as told in the Bible. The underlying *purpose* of it is clearly stated.

God said to Noah, "I will destroy (or, wipe them out) *with the earth.*"[1] The later statement is that "The order (or arrangement) of things that then was, being overflowed with water, came to an end."[2]

The *process* in the Flood is as clearly put. "The fountains of the great deep were *broken up* and the windows of heaven were opened."[3] The action was through enormously great quantities of water, from both below and above.

The *result* was that all the earth, including all the highest mountains, was covered to a depth of from twenty-five feet (roughly) upward. And all life on the earth was blotted

[1] Genesis 6: 13. [2] II Peter 3: 6.
[3] Genesis 7: 11.

out, except the little group in the big oblong floating boat.

Then, the story tells just *how much time* this took. It was not simply one big inundation. The whole movement ran through more than a year.

The initial outburst of waters, above and below, ran through almost six weeks. The waters prevailed at their highest stage one hundred and fifty days. One recalls the geological calculation that that is the length of time estimated for the tidal movement. Then there was a gradual decrease, until the dove returned to the ark with the fresh olive leaf plucked off.

The *purpose* was the complete wiping out of that *generation.* Then there would be an utterly fresh start, on a radically changed earth, with radically changed conditions. Such is the Story of the Flood, as told in the Book of God.

It is surely significant that traditions of such a flood are found among men everywhere. It is striking, too, to note Jesus' repeated reference to the Flood. He is commonly accepted as the sanest of men and of teachers.

He plainly accepted and taught this Bible Story of the Flood. Indeed he did more. He used it as a measurement for future events.

Listen to him: "As it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the (coming) days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that . . . the flood came and destroyed them all."[1]

[1] Luke 17: 26–27.

Two Documents That Tally.

We come back then to the law of probability. As one carefully studies the story of the rocks, the whole probability, to the point of moral certainty, is that the Flood is a settled fact.

It is the most outstanding event in the history of the *race*. It is the most stupendous fact in the history of the *earth*. It is striking that the earth itself insists on the accuracy of the story of the Book.

Men risk untold billions of dollars and pounds sterling, on the practical workings of the law of probability. The thoughtful man may well risk much more, his faith, his life, his future, on—the law of probability? Yes, that, and then on more, immensely more, the very Word of God.

A good many years ago the city mission work of New York City was directed, in its remarkable activities, by Dr. A. F. Schauffler, a close friend of dear Dwight Moody. One day the mail brought to Dr. Schauffler's desk a letter from eastern Europe, I think, from old Bohemia.

The letter contained a queer looking piece of paper. One edge of it was jagged, in an irregular uneven way, as though it had been torn from a similar piece.

The letter said a trunk or box was being sent in care of the mission, for a young man, who would call for it.

This young man would have the other part of the piece of paper enclosed in the letter. That would be his identification, and establish his right to the trunk.

The letter was filed away. The box came,

and was sent to the storage room to await its owner. One day a young man called, quite evidently a foreigner. He inquired for the trunk, and presented a torn piece of paper to make good his claim.

The letter was brought out from the file, with its strange piece of torn paper. It was an intensely interesting moment, as the two pieces of paper were put together. They fitted perfectly. The identification was quite clear. And the young man got his box.

Here, in the Flood narrative, are two documents. The one is written in a book. The other is written in a much larger book, the earth, in indelible characters that can't be rubbed out.

When these two are put together they are found to fit. They fit so exactly as to make quite clear that they are simply two accounts of the one event. The identification could not be more clear and complete.

2. The Messenger to the Prodigal Race—The Jew Nation, and its Breakdown

The Story: Genesis 11:10 to Esther

More Light for Shut Eyes.

Out of the darkest night the sun *will* rise. Every sore question contains its own answer. The defying problem has the solution tucked away inside. It is a matter of getting at it.

Shut eyes kept out the light, so far as they could; never all. The race, in the main, had chosen to go down hill; with fine exceptions.

The highest power, free choice, was being used to go toward, and to, the lowest.

But "Love never faileth." Something must be done. Something could be done. Love's resources know no bottom. Something was done. It proved a big something. It is still in the vigour of its youth. Love knows no old age; only a finer maturing.

Over all the tangle men were making with free choice, a matted messy tangle, Love, God, was brooding, tender and strong. Men might shut their eyes to the light, but they couldn't shut God out. And they can't. Blessed "can't" that!

Those shutting, shut, eyes suggested to love what to do. The right must be intensified yet more in its shining. It must be brought yet closer up. Men must be helped to choose right, and not refuse this soft gracious clear wooing light.

The wooing comes nearer. It gets more insistent. Its music sounds in men's ears above the clang of street jangle. Its light searches into the darkest night, and the cobwebby corners.

A messenger was chosen. It was to be a torch bearer of the light. It must be in close touch with those hugging the darkness. So a kinsman was chosen, a human kinsman, a brother to those stumbling in the dark.

The messenger must be in close touch with the light, closest touch. Only so could the real thing of light be carried into the gathered and gathering gloom. So a kinsman was chosen, a

kinsman to the Light, one made in the image, a Son of the Light.

It took a long time, by earth's calendars. (Love ignores calendars.) For there were three things to make sure of. And all three must be grown.

The messenger must get the light, true, clear, full, penetrating. And, *and*, more yet, and much harder, the messenger must itself live in the light it gives others.

For this is moral light. It means conduct, personal conduct, act and habit and life. Conduct changes very slowly. It's like cold molasses at the North Pole. Only heat can make any change.

And moral light must be lived out if it is to be given out. And so it would mean a lot of calendared time to get a messenger to live the message. For giving by living is the true giving.

And then the message must be given out, plain and clear, full and steady. The light must shine, soft, clear, sure, into those shut and shutting eyes.

For light itself tends to open shut eyes. Eyes have a natural affinity for the light, a liking, a natural turning to it. It limbers up closed eyelids toward opening.

The messenger was to be the messenger to the prodigal race. That word "prodigal" needs a word. It has an ugly sound. Its use has an ugly sound. Its use sometimes means an ugly spirit.

It really means wasteful, all of that, but sim-

ply that. Back of "wasteful" is thoughtlessness, really willful thoughtlessness. And back of that is free choice choosing not to choose what it should choose.

A prodigal is one who has been given an inheritance, some considerable substance, or mental talent. It cost him nothing, and so is not appreciated. It is foolishly wasted, and squandered, in a way that hurts into both blood and bone.

And it is heart-breaking to know that this is the accurate word to use here of the race. Free choice—rarest inheritance!—had been, has been, used wastefully. It has been used carelessly, willfully, to choose the bad; with many fine exceptions.

Getting the Messenger: Genesis 11: 10 to Exodus 15

The Man of Ur.

It took six generations, from Abram to Moses, running through over six centuries, to get this messenger. Then it had to be sent to school. And schooling is slow work any time.

It is yet slower when it is to reach in to the heart and out into feet and hands, actual conduct.

The start of the story is more fascinating than any bit of fiction. A man, a family, a tribe, a brood of tribes, a nation, that's the story in the rough.

That man with—(rarest of all things)—an

inner ear open to God's voice, with a deep-rooted conviction of what he should do, and, rarer yet, a rock-rooted will to do it, no matter about heart breaks and personal disadvantage, that's the cornerstone of the nation. And that cornerstone is laid in mortar sacrificially red.

A nation, by mere count of numbers, then a nation welded together into an inseparable unit by the fierce fires of persecution, *and* then by a stupendous deliverance, through supernatural intervention, that's the slower spelling out of the story.

Then that nation in school, in the carefully graded University of Arabia, shut sharply off from touch with all others of the race for a full generation, that's an intense significant chapter of the story.

That nation is a part of the race of men, blood of its blood, yet utterly separated from all the rest of the race. It's a sharp-cut cleavage that separates. And that cleavage still remains, up to this hour, and never more marked than now.

Then, that peculiarly separate nation, in action, intense aggressive action, in war, in peace, in ideals; and then, that nation failing, miserably utterly failing, that's the story a bit more fully told.

And all the while the race of men, that is all the other, non-Jew, peoples, are in closest touch. They are never out of the picture. They are sleeplessly watching, endlessly discussing, keenly conscious of the unfailing ideals, *and* of the failing nation.

The nation was in that man. That is the beginning of the story. I do not mean simply that he was the outstanding ancestor of the nation. That was true, of course. But the thing goes deeper in, and finer, than that.

The ideals that the nation grew to stand to all the rest, for, ideally, characteristically, those ideals were in the man.

They were given growing room, soil and atmosphere, and moisture and cultivation. It was because of his ideals, and his willingness to live up to his ideals, through stiffest tugs, that Abram was chosen to father the future messenger nation.

And the nation's failure, dismal heart-breaking failure, was *possible* in the man, too. It's always so. Every man has possible failure in himself, and has possible full victory, too.

It's a nip-and-tuck fight. There's a possible Judas in every beloved saintly John, and a possible John in every traitorous Judas. And the man himself decides which shall win out, and so, how far he can be of use to God's plan.

There is fascination in looking at this man Abram. For he is a mirror. An ideal held tight to, an open ear to hear the Voice, a spirit willing to obey, in spite of sharp-edged stones in the road, and stinging thorn bushes on both sides the road;

A spirit discernment growing *in* the path of obedience, a poised understanding, a sanity of outlook and judgment, that's this man chosen to start the new racial messenger.

This is the man as he is chosen, and this is the

man as he grew, steadier, clearer, deeper in these character traits.

Look at the initial startingpoint for this man. It was a clear quiet starry night, probably. The man was alone, out in the open, likely praying, wordlessly perhaps, communing with the God of his fathers.

He is brooding, reaching out and up in spirit, once again shaking his ideals clear of the day's touch with the crowd, tightening the knots a bit tighter yet, eagerly reaching out the hands of his spirit up to the Father.

As quiet as the noiseless dew, as distinct as the clear notes of a vibrant bell, the Voice spake to his inner spirit ear, "*Get thee out*—and I will make—." With the words came an intense sense of reality, and a deep quiet in his inner spirit.

And the man of Ur obeyed. That was his choice, freely made. So this messenger nation started in free choice, freely choosing God's choice.

The start once made, the line trails the future homeland, through three generations, foreigners. There's a sinister influence, ever on its flank, and getting inside.

Contemptible trickery, vile impurity, cowardly compromise, hatred and violence, these stand out in ugly light. There's the slimy touch of Darkness attacking and staining the coming messenger of light.

Then there are three generations in Egypt. They give Egypt its premier. And he gives Egypt a new racial dominance. Separate terri-

tory, phenomenal growth, immense prestige, intoxicating prosperity, follow with sure steady step.

Then the clouds gather, thick, black-gray, ominous. And then the storm breaks. The iron of cruel slavery eats into their very being. Long decades bring despair. The outlook could not be more hopeless, black.

But sleepless Love is brooding, wisely, patiently, bringing to vigorous birth the new life. One of themselves, after long training, grips the leadership, and utterly breaks arrogant Egypt, which never recovers from the blow.

And ringing songs thrill the air as the Red Sea opens for them, and closes forever on their oppressors. The family of two has grown in numbers to three millions. The slaves have become free. The messenger has already begun the training for its racial mission.

Six centuries and more seem long and slow in time. But results can't be measured by clock nor calendar. Events can't be told by count. They must be weighed. A nation has been born, aye, *the* nation, the racial messenger. And its indelible impress is deep in the race, to this very hour.

Getting the Message: Exodus—Leviticus—Numbers—Deuteronomy

The Eden Message.

Now for the second big thing. It's really first in significance though second in the count. Getting the messenger is absolutely necessary.

But the big thing is the message it is to carry. The messenger is for the message. It is the servant. The message is to be the master controlling the servant.

The story runs through a generation of forty years. It takes four of these little pamphlet-books to tell it. It runs from the weedy Red Sea, tinged by the reddish reed growths, to the swift muddy Jordan. It takes a nation from babyhood to a nation matured, trained, seasoned, ready for action.

We can appreciate this message better if we look at the message back in Eden. It's the same message here as there, there as here, of course.

That Eden message was very simple. It was eloquent, tremendous, in its sheer simplicity. It can be put in three items, love, purity, and life-blood spilt to mend a break. Love and purity mean the same. But in present time confusion it helps to repeat both words.

Love? That means a *person*. When it isn't it isn't love; it's a base imitation. There is always a person at each end of love, or it isn't the real thing.

To say that "God is love," is the same as saying "God is a person." A person, who is the very essence of love, that's the Eden message, in part.

The second item is purity. For love is pure. To say that God is love is the same as saying God is pure. The two things mean the same thing. Purity is all that should be, and nothing of what shouldn't be.

And, then, life-blood spilt to mend a break, is

love in action, love in an emergency. A break breaks off life. It takes life to give life. Only through life given out does new life come in.

There were three in Eden, of course. That's another repetition. For it takes three to make a fully rounded personality. There was a human being in Eden, one full human in two persons, a man and a woman. Together these two made up the full rounded human.

Again, of course. There would be this man, for God is love. And love gives itself. And so the presence of God there meant the presence of this two-celled, this dual man made in the image of God.

And these three had fellowship together. There would need to be three, of course, for fellowship. For love, fellowship, love fully matured, must have three for full natural expression. That's mere philosophy.

There are two who love, and whose love is drawn out to a third. And the love drawn out to the third affects the love of the two for each other. So the real thing of love comes to the full, and only so.

That Eden fellowship of God and man at once reveals purity, with a new fine meaning in the word. For there can be fellowship only where there is full oneness of spirit, and desire, aim and condition. Intimacy means equality in the essentials.

And there is plain warning. Of course, for love controls. A break with God, through choice, meant death. "Dying thou shalt die;" an act, a process, a final result.

Death, a break, separation from God, lurked at that tree of knowledge through choice. Only man could rout it out by choosing to stay in touch with God.

And when the break came, through the choice made, there's the instant break in spirit by the man, with God.

The expulsion from the Garden graphically pictures the break, *and* a return some day within its carefully guarded gate. It was to be kept pure for man's return.

Abel's blood sacrifice just outside Eden's gate, life given for life, without doubt was tutored action. He had been taught what to do.

Here, then, is the Eden message in the language of pictured action, and plain spoken word. God, a Person, the very essence of love, in fellowship with a man, two who are one, in the spirit atmosphere of purity.

And, *and*, there is the possibility of death, hingeing on man's use of his free choice. *And*, then, there is a new spirit life gotten through a life given. Life is gotten again through life given clean out.

Love, purity, fellowship, a break possible through man's choice, fellowship renewed through life given clean out for new life to be gotten,—this is the Eden message.

Let us keep this Eden message in mind as we now gather up the Horeb message, so sorely needed, for racial shut eyes.

The Repeated Message.

Now, it is most significant to note the message

given to the messenger. It proved to be a repetition of the Eden message, but in a wholly changed atmosphere.

That was given in a garden; this in a wilderness. Man's use of free choice has made that radical change. The other was the natural message in Eden. This is the sorely needed message in a wilderness, a moral world-wilderness.

This message was given in three stages. And this, in turn, burns in its singular significance. There was actual experience, for the heart. There was object-lesson teaching, for eyes and ears. There was long-repeated, graded spoken teaching, for the mind, and memory.

The actual experience for the heart dug in deep. It plowed deep furrows in flesh and heart. And they never came out.

There came first the experience of sorest suffering, actual physical pain and more, in Egypt, through long bitter rigour and years. They could never forget that.

Then, the exact reversal of all this. They were keenly conscious of the remarkable protection they had in the midst of the terrifying disasters to their oppressors. They could never forget that.

Hard on the heels of that came the yet more marvellous deliverance at the Red Sea, when life for them meant death for their persecutors. The liberty that brought, sweet liberty, could not be forgot.

These actual experiences were the deep dug lines of the message. With the Flaming Mount, and the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, through the

years, these Egypt experiences told of the one God.

He was personal. He acted on their behalf. He spoke. Their eyes saw. Their hearts felt. Their ears heard. He had power beyond their wildest imagination.

Egypt found that out, and they, too. He had been their friend in their sore need. All that power was used *for them.* He was *love!*

He was *patient* with their fault findings and failings, their bad wobbling and cowardice. He never left them. And patience is love, knowing all, feeling till it hurts, but holding steady and true, and never leaving. His very presence, constantly, and under sore provocation, this was the message in a very appealing way.

Then there was the object-lesson teaching. It was ever before their eyes, in their very midst. That oblong Tent, with its rich colourings, its exquisitely woven tapestries,

Made too with their own free offerings, and by their own hands, and the pictured teaching of its arrangement, outside and in, all this talked in very homely forceful language.

And, far more, far deeper, yet more full of simple significant meanings, was the daily round at that Tent. The various offerings, daily and yearly, talked constantly and loudly to their eyes and ears.

The message here was simple and unmistakable. Break with God meant break with life, for all life came from him. Those blood sacrifices were not arbitrary requirements.

They simply taught certain facts. Break with

life is death. Then there was more: The voluntary offerer of a sacrifice talked in that act. The blood is the life.

His own life had been broken off by his willful break with Life. He was acknowledging his wrong, and now his purpose to come back in touch again. So through touch again he had new life. So the Tent, and the Tent Service taught.

There was the tragic badness of wrong choice in that breaking with God, the getting back through living blood shed, then a new life, and through all this actual touch with God again.

And all this, be it keenly marked, was planned by God himself. And he was the God they had come to know in their actual experience with such intense reality. That teaching was before their eyes, day in and day out.

Could there be a simpler, truer, better, teaching of the Gospel of later years? What Jesus did, in dying, voluntarily, for others, and then living again, this brings the truth home with a tremendous intensity and tenderness, but adds nothing in principle.

And then follows the spoken teaching. It was for mind and memory. It was to train the judgment, and strengthen the will in right choice.

It ran through a full generation of time. It ran from earliest years through youth to mature strength. It was simply a repetition of the teaching of experience and object lesson.

It gave a seasoned judgment, an understanding heart, and an intelligently willing spirit ready for action. The nation is ready. The

message is gotten. Now, to live it out, and give it out.

Giving the Message Out: Joshua through to Esther

The Racial Sounding-Board.

A new day is breaking. It's a new day for the race. It's a new opportunity, really an intenser pushing in of the ever-present opportunity. Men are to be helped yet more to choose the one right.

Man's utter freedom to choose as he chooses ever remains. It is never lessened nor infringed on, not by as much as half the width of a narrow hair.

But the wooing grows tenser and more tender. The light shines yet nearer, yet clearer. If man doesn't choose right it will not be for lack of light.

The gray has been streaking the east for quite a bit. That drastic breaking of arrogant Egypt had made the race stare and gasp.

The Canaan nations knew it was their turn next. For the conquering Jew came out on their side of Egypt. They gasped loud. They stared wildly. Then they settled down to a yet more unintelligent hardened obstinacy. Stubbornness is determination minus intelligence.

There was a pause of a full generation. The conquerors tarry in the Wilderness. But that investigating commission made plain their objective. Canaan understood. Now, there is a

respite. It's a pleading. It lasts a full generation of time. "Love never faileth."

But, "light resisted bringeth night." Wooing rejected hardens the heart. They grew yet worse. And that is saying a lot. Their lustful immoralities nauseate the very earth. It can't stomach them. It spews them out. The very planet vomits.

It is most significant that this Canaan strip, skirting the Mediterranean, is chosen as the new racial sounding-board for this racial messenger.

Here is the natural racial sounding-board of the whole planet. It has so been used for long centuries. It is to be used yet again in a most dramatic way. So the Story of the Book says.

Here is the structural backbone of our planet. The three racial continents, Europe, Asia, Africa, dovetail here. The others are geographical extensions of these. Geologists point out the geological unity of this long stretch, running diagonally here from northeast to southwest.

From the Trans-Caucasus (between the Black and Caspian seas), through the vast Euphrates basin, it skirts the east end of the Mediterranean, and runs on far down into the African continent.

With the center of racial action shifting, now here, now there, this is the stretch of territory that has influenced most the history of the race, European, Asiatic, and African.

Almost every great military strategist, the armies of actually every dominating nation, have fought here. Its soil has been wetted by the spilt blood of racial mankind.

With its bordering waters, it has been traversed by more trade caravans and ships, ancient and modern, than any other stretch of territory.

It has been, historically, a veritable sounding-board for all the race. It may not be bad for us modest (?) Westerners to recall that all the culture, as all the religions of the race, is Asiatic in origin. Recent archæological research makes this yet clearer.

And old Canaan, land and water, was the center, the throbbing heart, of this great strip. Clearly, there is a racial purpose working out in the choice of Canaan as the sounding-board for this new giving out of the old message.

Here the early Eden message is to be rung out, in the ears of all men, in vibrant tones. Here the soft clear full light is to shine out to the very ends of the earth, into every crack and cranny and crevice.

Painful Racial Surgery.

There would be some painful work in taking possession of this sounding-board. The skilled surgeon carries a razor-edged knife, but to heal. He plunges it in deep—that new life may come. Healing salve always goes with the knife. It's difficult dangerous work. He guards his own person most cautiously against infection during the surgical operation.

This, and only this, explains the treatment dealt out to these Canaan nations by God's own direction. There was to be a racial surgical operation.

It would be most painful, and distressing to perform. It would be merciful, even as the actual surgeon's careful plunging in of the knife is to save life.

The surgical knife was plunged in. The ulcerated gangrenous infection was cut out. The life was saved, the life of the race.

It is doubtful if any of us can take it in, that the race lives to-day because of that bit of distressing healing racial surgery.

The diseased parts were to be cut out, absolutely. No infection must be allowed to remain. At this point there came a bad slip. The surgeon got infected.

Rank selfishness, and cowardice, and faintheartedness, spoilt the job, in part. So ugly infection got into the blood. It brought death later, national death to the new racial messenger.

But there was a long interval before that. And meanwhile the racial day of clear light shining was graciously lengthened out.

As Joshua leads the Jew army into Canaan it becomes quite plain, from the military point of view, that there is a power at work, clear beyond the human agencies in action.

The Jew nation was not characteristically a military power, then nor since. These nations to be dispossessed were. Militarism was their outstanding characteristic. They were there simply because they had ridden roughshod over weaker peoples.

These hardened militarists were sweepingly overcome by a power essentially non-militaris-

tic. It is most significant. It reveals something, some One, at work quite beyond the human.

It is further most significant to note the Jericho model of action at the start. It stands sharply out. Those of us opposed to war, on moral principle, are keenly interested.

From the military point of view, the siege of Jericho seems only foolish, absurd. Rams' horns! Soldiers silently solemnly marching around the city!! How absurd it seems from the common point of view.

It has just one meaning. Paul's irony fits. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." So, *so*, it is plain that the unseen God of Egypt's undoing was in action, here, again.

But, *but*, it's rare to find a man willing to stay up on God's level in the action of life, rare in scarcity, and rare in preciousness.

And Joshua didn't. And God works just as far as he can on the level of *method* we insist on. On *moral* levels he never varies a half-hair's breadth.

The God Kingdom: Joshua—Judges—Ruth.

There are three stages in the story from this on. The first stage is the God-kingdom, centering at Shiloh. The second is the man-kingdom, centering at Jerusalem. The third is the Exile, centering at the Euphrates, with the Return.

The God-kingdom runs through some five centuries. The conquest and settlement of the land was well started. Then they stopped to get the Shiloh center set up.

It became the center of the national life and

worship. That tapestried Tent, with its rare weavings and colourings, its daily service and sacrifice and worship, became the throbbing heart of the nation's life, even as in the Wilderness.

It is called the God-kingdom because it was just that. It was totally unlike any other. It was meant to be. It was on the plan given Moses by God on the Horeb Mount.

It was the early Eden plan. There life centered in God's presence. Here at Shiloh, as in the Wilderness, the life of the nation centered in God's presence in the oblong Tent, for over five centuries.

And the message went out to the ends of the earth. The race had watched a-gasp at the overthrow of Egypt dominance.

They had stared with bulging eyes at the conquest of Canaan. They noted this new sort of nation. They talked of this Jehovah worship. Its meaning was discussed. All tongues wagged ceaselessly. All eyes bulged sleeplessly.

Out to the farthest rim of things, men knew, and stared, and took note. Some rejoiced. Some rebelled in spirit. Some pondered deeply. Hearts were stirred.

The message of the Jehovah nation went out. That Eden message, renewed at Horeb, pictured in the daily service of this God-Tent, went out to the race.

The one God, who himself was love itself, in personal touch with man, utter purity of conduct, life given clear out for life broken off by wrong choice;

And then a pure strong personal life possible again, in full touch with this rare loving personal God—that was the message. It began in Eden. It was burned in at Horeb with dramatic intensity. Now it is being given out by this God nation situated at the very "navel of the earth."[1]

And all the race listened, *and* understood quite appreciably. For the Spirit of God is always in that message. He speaks its truth in every human heart.

And the failings of the Messenger were watched, too, and talked over. That little thirteen-leaved Judges is a strange study in lights and shadows. It's up and down, defeat and victory, wrong doing and repentance.

It's a true mirror of what many a life actually is. And that exquisite prose-poem, Ruth, reveals the inner heart of the common people through all the nation's failures.

And, *and*, all the time God broods over them, ceaselessly wooing. Free choice reigns. Men make life what it actually is by their choices.

When they choose to look up again God, quick as a flash, helps. He never fails. The see-saw movement follows faithfully, relentlessly, their choice.

The David-Kingdom: I and II Samuel—I and II Kings—I and II Chronicles.

Then, there is a radical change in national organization. They ask God for a man-king. They want to be like all the others. God moves

[1] Ezekiel 38: 12. Judges 9: 37. Revision, margin.

to their level *in outer form*. That's their choice. He helps.

The new order starts with a significant failure. Then the David-kingdom is set up. It centers in Jerusalem. It comes to its greatest glory under Solomon. But in initiative, in precedent set and followed, in his careful planning, it remains the David-kingdom.

Then there is a fresh break, distressing. Solomon the wisest man becomes the rankest moral fool, by choice. The kingdom splits and weakens. The message is badly blurred.

It is still given out, in gorgeous temple building, and temple service. But the nation follows the leader, of course. The down-road is easy and lazy. Yet the heart of the nation comes out in the great moral pull-up, every now and then, through the long years.

But it is a down grade, steadily down, morally, and so materially. Egypt in the south, Assyria-Babylon on the north take turns in fighting and looting them.

Then they are clean done for, the northern split-off first, then the southern. The nation that downed imperial Egypt, and militaristic Canaan, is in exile, broken up, disgraced, a by-word of hissing and reproach.

Seventy years of exile, and a scraggly minority return. Again Jerusalem and the temple are built, the old worship renewed, and the people purified. Though some of the old men weep at the contrast with the former glory.

Their return is singularly significant. It is contrary to all historical precedent. It is an

unexplained exception, from the common point of view.

But, *but,* there is a purpose in it. There is a purpose working out of it. So the Book says. And it is the Story of the Book that concerns us just now.

And all the while the race is watching. All eyes are glued on that Jew nation, at the center of the earth.

All ears are listening to the echoes of that racial sounding-board. All tongues are talking, talking about that message, and the traitor-messenger. All thinking men are thinking. And many a heart is praying.

For, be it keenly marked, that message, like the glory of the heavens, has gone out through all the earth and its word to the end of the world.

For five centuries (rough count) the message went out from Shiloh. For a bit longer from Jerusalem, the fortress-city of Peace. For nearly two hundred more it had gone out through Exile and Return.

It is most striking the influence the scattered Jew has exerted, through the centuries, and among all peoples. A few comparatively return to the homeland. Most remain scattered in the Euphrates valley, and everywhere else.

Peculiarly a scattered people, yet the Jew is never lost. Everywhere in contact with other peoples, yet the Jew is never absorbed or merged, always separate.

And everywhere he has taken his ideals, of the one God, the Book revealing God, the Horeb

code of morals, and the integrity of family life.

Man may fail. The messenger may fail utterly. But "Love never faileth." God has insisted. The messenger has gone bad. But the message has gone out.

The purpose in getting the messenger has been achieved, in spite of man's dismal failure. It is prophetic. It means much before the story is done, God's story.

Jew Dominance in History.

It is a yet more striking fact that seven times Jew leadership has dominated the race. And in that leadership, that dominance, the emphasis has been on the one Jehovah God, and the true Jehovah worship, *and* that outstanding Horeb code of morals.

Joseph was premier of the world empire of Egypt for eighty years, greatly extending its sway over the race.

Moses was the leader of the epochal movement that utterly broke the imperial power of Egypt. And it never recovered from the blow dealt.

That event made him the best known man of the race, as they watched, and wondered, during those forty desert years.

The Canaan Conquest, under Joshua, Moses' successor, broke completely the power of the greatest military nations of the race. The prestige of it went out everywhere, for generations.

The David-Solomon reign was literally a world empire through its dominance for eighty

years. Neighbouring nations paid tribute in gold, and all nations paid homage. The Queen of Sheba was the whole outer world doing reverence.

Even in exile this world dominance persisted. This strange exiled Jew dominated the race. For a full seventy years, probably, Daniel was the premier, and practical ruler, of the world empire of Babylon.

And twice, under most outstanding dramatic conditions, the Jehovah God and worship were given exceptional prominence. Those three rare heroes in the fiery furnace, and that night in the lion's den, intensified the influence.

Twice over the imperial proclamation went out to "all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in the earth." And each time it was to proclaim Jehovah the one true God.

Mordecai the Jew was premier of the Ahasuerus Persian-Median Empire. It extended from Ethiopia in central Africa to far India. That was the whole world of the day.

All this, it will be noted, comes within the time limits of this story of the messenger nation. It is surely very striking that even in exile, a subject people, the Jew, thus dominated the world life.

The Non-Christian Religions.

Here is the historical setting of the present group of non-Christian religions. They come, mostly, as the Jew nation goes. That evil spirit power in Eden, and in this Jew break-up, is in action, double action, breaking and bringing.

These non-Christian religions are a strange mixture of primary truths and evil teachings. The thing to note is which of these two dominates. This is the key. Any religion must be measured by its influence on the practices of the common mass.

Lust dominates India, the more loathsome because coupled with religious forms. A strange stagnation has dominated hoary China for a thousand years.

Hinduism came in with the Aryan conquest of India through the Khyber Pass. It was subtly devised to keep the conquered in subjection. It was dubbed a religion, so fitting into the religious instinct in man.

Buddhism was a revolt against Hinduism. Its fatalistic pessimism destroys individual initiative. It robs man of motive and energy. It lost its hold long ago in India. But it has a strangle-hold on China in that strange stagnation there, which puzzles the scholarly student of great China. The culture that spread over both hemispheres, prehistorically and historically, became stagnant under Buddhism's touch.

Confucianism makes patriotism a religious cult, not confessedly, but practically. Shintoism plays the same rôle in Japan. The energy that marks the last seventy-odd years of Japan came through touch with the West.

That four-prismed light that lights every man, outer nature, inner instinct, intimate circumstance, the new babe, is the background of primary truth.

This Jew messenger has flooded the Horeb

code of light into the face of the race through centuries. This has intensified the shining of the primary light.

China has been singularly true to this doubled primary light in one particular, parental reverence. Even though carried to bad extremes, it explains the national continuance of China through millenniums, the one racial exception.

As the beginnings of these religions fit in to the Jew national break-up, so, centuries after, Mohammedanism fits into the break-up of the Church in its distinctive Jew-racial mission.

Mohammedanism is a strange mix-up of Jew and Christian and heathen teachings, with the last clearly dominant in its moral, immoral, lustful influence on common life. The burst of wild energy that carried it over northern Africa and into southern Europe, and elsewhere, is not native to its teaching. There was clearly an evil spirit power at work there behind the scenes.

Its essential fatalism kills initiative. It was European political necessity that dealt the death-blow to that attempted world-domination.

It is most striking to mark the characteristic Jew traits, despite scatterings, material and moral. Family integrity, high ideals of morality, and a peculiarly aggressive initiative of action, mark this scattered people. These are the moral imprint on the Jew people of their Book, and their Horeb moral code.

Error unassisted falls by sheer dead weight. It must borrow a bit of truth for wings. Here is the keynote to the present group of non-

Christian religions. It classes them with the pre-Christian group, in Greece and Rome and northern Europe, long gone and forgotten.

A few hundred years later, another Jew, Jesus, became and still continues to be, the foremost personality of the entire race. To us Christians he is more than that, beyond words, more.

But just now it is remembered that he was a Jew, humanly, racially. He was the Jewish Messiah, even in his rejection.

Further, Christianity tells of the influence of the messenger people even in its failure. From the purely historical point of view, Christianity is the offspring of that Jew messenger.

Thus far, it is a continuance of Jewish influence. Its influence is the most dominating influence in all the earth, even where its Jewish founder is accepted, not as the Saviour, but only as teacher.

Through Christian missions, and distinctively through Bible translation in the six hundred and more languages, the influence of that Jewish messenger has searched into the farthest recesses of the earth.

And, *and,* there is yet more. It's future. Yet it is a part of the Story of the Book. There is an eighth period to add to these seven. That will complete the rhythmic octave. Some day the Kingdom will over-spread all the earth. Jesus, the Jew, the Messiah of the Jew, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the one distinctive Son of Man, will reign over the re-established Jew Kingdom.

And that Jew Kingdom will be the first na-

tion of the race. That all other nations will yield, voluntarily, glad homage reveals at once that the Jew will be a radically changed Jew.

At least this is part of the Story of the Bible. And that is what concerns us just now.

The Songs and Literature of the Jew Nation: Job: Psalms: Proverbs: Ecclesiastes: Song of Solomon

The Problem of Human Suffering.

Songs tell the inner heart of any people. And in turn they mould the children, and every one else. The literature of a people is a look in at their inner feelings and longings.

There are five little books here. Commonly called poetry, they are really the songs and literature of the Jew. In them we feel the inner heart throb of the nation.

Job is from Moses' pen. So the ripest Hebrew scholarship agrees. It was written in the desert sands, alone with the sheep.

He was suffering as a fugitive exile. He was suffering sorely over the sore suffering of his people in Egypt. The book deals with the age-long problem of human suffering.

It is Moses' spirit autobiography. It lets us feel the tense throb of his heart. It reveals his rare spirit understanding. Moses learned much in the school of the desert sands and the rainless blue. Rare literary skill uses an actual incident as the basis.

Troubles, bodily, mental, through circumstances, never come from God. They come from

Satan, *through* human channels, usually some broken law, by permission of God, for a purpose of love, and within his strictly marked limits. They are a schooling, to lead us to choose God's will of love and right.

As quickly as we learn our lesson, the suffering is taken away, down here, in this life. And the after part is doubly more blessed, both in outer circumstance, and inner experience.

This is the story of Job. It is the story of the whole Book, from end to end, and the story of life.

The Sweet Psalmist.

The Book of Psalms was prepared for public worship. It was begun by Moses for the Tabernacle service in the Wilderness. Moses was a psalmist and musician. Choral singing had a large place from the first.

The book was added to extensively by David. Later editings and additions, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, adapted the songs to later times and experiences.

This Psalm Book tells a story. This is of immense interest. There are five notes, struck again and again. That Eden-Horeb message recurs throughout. There is a strange strong minor chord of spirit warfare. Here the personal element is very strong.

From end to end, the pages fairly leap out with praise, joyous, exuberant. Then there is a distinct prophetic note struck again and again.

It sees a crisis coming. It is terrific, and actually world-wide.[1] And then, following that,

[1] Psalms 2, 46–50, 76, 110.

there comes a gracious world-wide Kingdom of God on earth, with the Jew in first place.[1]

There is some One coming to clear the crisis, and start the new order of things. That some One is the father's Son. This is the rhythmic story of the Book of Psalms.

Solomon's Three.

The other three are by Solomon. They tell the story of three stages of his personal religious experience.

The Song of Solomon comes first in his experience. It is written in the fine flush of his early personal touch with God, under the indescribable presence of the Holy Spirit.

Under the imagery of pure love between a man and a woman, it tells of the intimate fellowship of a man with God. It is a familiar note in this Book throughout. Through the old pleading prophetic pages, through Paul's pen, and in the glory touch at the very close, this tender note is used.[2] With all the endless confusion of comment, this is the one simple meaning here.

The Book of Proverbs comes in this same early tender stage of Solomon's first-love experience. It reveals the fullness of the answer to his prayer for wisdom.

God, personified as Wisdom, pleads for a personal life wholly under the control of his Spirit.

[1] Psalms 72, 93–100.

[2] See Jeremiah 2: 2; Ezekiel 16: 8–14; Hosea 2: 14–20; Ephesians 5: 23–25; Revelation 19: 7; 21: 2, 9; 22: 17; and many others.

There is special pleading for utter personal purity, with warnings against evil women.[1]

There follows a collection of rare incisive sentences, business maxims, wise counsels, for the common give-and-take of daily life;[2] and others added.[3] If only the man had lived afterwards as he talks here!

Then comes the Ecclesiastes. It belongs at the other extreme. The wise man had become a moral fool. It's the dissipated libertine, the drunkard, talking "the morning after." He had tasted of every forbidden pleasure. It all palls on his jaded palate.

Yet he seems to sense his own failure. He gives a last word of wisdom. Yet his life talks so loud you can't hear what his tongue says.

And, in all, his pen has never lost its rare cunning of language and beauty. Ecclesiastes is the red warning signal, flying alongside the spoken wisdom of Proverbs.

The "my" Finger.

This old Book grew up out of human life, under the Spirit's guidance and control. And so it makes a deep tug in the human heart.

A simple illustration is in the shepherd psalm, that much loved Twenty-third Psalm, the homely way it was probably made.

David was a shepherd lad, likely in his upper teens. One day he is out with the sheep, when his quick eye saw a little lamb lagging behind. So it must have been springtime, lambing time.

[1] Chapters 1–9.
[2] Chapters 10–29.
[3] Chapters 30–31.

With a warm flush at his heart, he picked it up, cuddled it in the crook of his arm, talking all the while,

"You look tired. Your legs are rather wobbly keeping up with the old folks. Let me rest you a bit."

And it would look up into his face, and seem to say, with its eyes, "I *was* pretty tired. It's lovely up here. Thank you so much."

Then, after a bit, he put it down, saying gently, "Run along now. Keep close to your mother. Don't get too ambitious like we men folks do."

And as he did, it came into his heart, so soft, so distinct, "that's what God is like, only he is more."

And, likely at once, he sat down on the ledge of a rock, and wrote down on some scrap, on his knee, aslant, "the Lord is *my* shepherd."

"I live with the sheep. I eat with them. I sleep with them." These thoughts kept running through his mind.

"If the lion or bear come I'd give my life for them. That's what God's like, only more." And so the Psalm grew up out of human life. And it has gone into the human heart everywhere.

Do you remember about the little Scotch lad who was very ill? The minister at the bedside took the child's hand in his own warm hands, and said those five words over, fitting them to the lad's fingers, "The Lord is my shepherd."

"Which word do you like best, my lad?" he said gently. And the little fellow, with a wan smile, took hold of the fourth, the "my," finger.

A little while after they found the little lad had slipped away, leaving his body behind. And they found one hand tightly clasped on the "my" finger of the other. His simple gesture told of his heart and its glad choice.

During the World War there was a Scottish unit of soldiers under orders for an advance on the morrow. Their chaplain had service with them the evening before. They sang a psalm in the rare Scottish way, and took of the holy bread and sacred cup.

He reminded them of the lad's story, with the "my" finger. And, quietly, he said, that if some of them found the morrow's fighting their last, they could tell of their simple faith in the Saviour by digging the "my" finger into the palm of the hand.

And on the morrow, going over the battlefield for any help he could give, his heart beat faster, and his eyes grew moist, as he found so many of his brave men, lying in death, with the "my" finger dug in deep and stiff.

Their action, as life went out, told of the decision, the choice, the faith, of their hearts, as they slipped over the door-sill of death into the fullness of life, the other side the door-sill.

The Burning, Ringing Messages, to the Jew Nation, and All the Race: Isaiah through Malachi

Three Strains.

When the night is darkest the stars shine brightest. In the darkening night of this Jew

nation there shone out clear and bright a new light. It really was not new, but it shone out more strongly.

This group of books called the Prophets is quite singular and distinctive in literature, and in this Book. The word prophet does not mean predicting the future, merely; though it includes this.

These men were really a sort of free-lance preachers, without official standing (with some exceptions). They were intensely earnest men, utterly devoted to God, and broken-hearted over moral conditions in the nation. They had marked power in swaying the crowds, sometimes intensely dramatic in action.

Under the Holy Spirit's touch, they had rare spirit discernment to understand the real trend of things. And they were used by the Spirit in speaking of the future.

There were earlier prophets who left no writings, though Elijah is the greatest of all in intense crisis action. Earlier yet, Moses and David had the prophetic gift and foresight.

These Prophet books fall into three simple groups, those before the national Break-down, those during the Exile, and those of the Return.

The outstanding leader in the earliest of these is Isaiah. He was probably of noble, possibly even royal, rank, and in direct touch with the king.

He was likely an intimate friend of two others, Micah and Hosea. Amos is the earliest of all in this group.

Jonah is really an incident, showing how God

graciously prepared the way for easing the exiles' stay, later, in a strange land. Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Joel come later in this same period.

The three outstanding men of this Break-up are Jeremiah in the homeland, with his sobbing Lamentations, and Ezekiel and Daniel among the exiles.

Obadiah and Nahum, in exile, have messages of warning to Edom, the inveterate traditional neighbour-enemy of the Jew, and to Nineveh the conqueror.

Haggai and Zechariah stir the returned exiles, in Jerusalem, in their work of restoration. The second Isaiah probably travels back and forth, between exiles and those returned, with his tremendously intense messages.

The text itself makes clear that this second group of Isaiah messages (chapters 40–66), under the particularly intense touch of the Holy Spirit, was spoken both to the returned exiles, and those yet on the Euphrates.

Malachi is the last word, before the silence of three or four centuries, to those selfishly smugly settled, back in Jerusalem. Then a significant silence falls.

Three things stand out in these burning, ringing prophetic messages. That old Eden-Horeb-Shiloh message is the strongly marked background.

With that unquestioned standard of conduct, personal and national, held high, these three strains hold sway. These currents run deep, and control the stream of prophetic teaching.

The moral conditions, sweeping and swaying

the national life like a cyclone wind the young trees of the forest, this stands out big in all these messages.

The emphasis swings, now here, now there. But this is the dominant note throughout. Sometimes the very pages sob, sometimes they almost seem to tear to pieces under the intensity.

A second thing standing sharply out is that a crisis is coming. Sometimes it clearly refers to the coming exile disgrace; sometimes to a yet greater crisis more than the exile itself, and beyond. This note is clear, sharply cut, and dominant throughout.

There's a third note, stirring, distinct, intense, emphatic. It makes the pages fairly glow with a radiant golden colouring. There is coming a glory reign of the Jew, some time in the future, world-wide again, but vastly greater in extent and glory than ever before. Its glory beggars language.

It is most striking that this coming national glory centers in a Person. His characteristic title is the God-Anointed One, the Messiah of later usage.

He will be God himself, coming among them. So the old Eden ideal would be realized on a vaster scale.

These prophetic messages are to the Jew nation, sternly rebuking, denouncing, warning, pleading, with intensest variation. Then, it is most striking, that there is a distinct group of messages to all the other nations of the earth.

There is an astounding boldness with which these men thunder their messages to these arro-

gant tyrannical nations near by, and out to the farthest known horizon. This is peculiarly true of Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Whatever some scholarly critics may think of all this, yet all can easily agree that it is the Story of the Book here. That is, if these words are read in their simple surface meaning, as they were spoken, and understood at the time.

JESUS!

Babe in a wee cradle;
Boy in a hill village;
Wondrous man on lake and land.
Then Gethsemane;
And then, then Calvary;
The God-man dying for you and me.
Hallelujah!

Rejoice, for he arose.
Happy, the wee cradle.
Blessed, village, lake, and land.
O Gethsemane!
And O, O Calvary!
He redeemed full life for you and me.
Hallelujah!

Forget not Olivet,
From whence he ascended,
Whither he will come again,
To reign as our king.
Our hearts, O let them ring,
As with glad uplifted heads we sing.
Hallelujah!

(Mary Kilgore Gordon.)

3. The New Leader of the Race, Jesus the Christ, and His Blood-Marked Victory

The Story: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

A Radical Racial Shift.

And now there's a silence, deep silence. The curtain drops on the scene of the Jew story. It's a thick curtain. Nothing gets through. There's dead silence for four hundred years, by common reckoning.

This is significant. Here is rare psychology. Peculiar emphasis is put on the event that breaks the silence. With tense breathing one watches the curtain of silence rise. What will it reveal?

During this gap of time striking things have happened in the world. Notable figures are on the world's stage of action, Socrates and Alexander in Greece, Julius Cæsar in Rome, Judas Maccabæus and Herod the Great in the Jew homeland.

The center of world action has swung, at last, after the long centuries, from the East into the West. That center is only a few hundred miles west of the meridian line between Orient and Occident.

And the territory under control of this western center, Rome, is mostly in the West, with Asiatic and African fringes. Still it is significant that the center of world empire had so swung. And the racial initiative has remained in the West since.

Racial leadership has swung as radically. From the Ham-Canaan line it had swung to

Shem for centuries. Now it has swung to the Japheth line, the northern and western peoples.

And, now, the silence breaks. The curtain rises, almost abruptly. What will be seen? It is most significant. *A man appears!* He is a new man, a new sort of man.

No, not really that. He is seen to be the old original sort of man, as man was meant to be, yet had failed to be.

It is most striking to note that the spirit currents of the earth are all a-thrill with an eager, awed expectancy. So the writers of the period declare.

There is something, or some one, coming, men are feeling, saying, without understanding much of how, or who. A sore racial need is felt into the marrow. This some one coming will, somehow, fit into that need. The soul of the race is eagerly expectant, all a-hush.

The Jew is a subject nation in their own homeland, with most of them scattered. Literally they are scattered, in city centers, out to the farthest horizons.

Jerusalem dominates the subject nation, under an autocratic priestly caste. The temple is now a fortress treasure-house, as well as a center of worship.

A rarely rich impressive ritual of choral music, and deep-intoned service, awes the temple throngs. The driving reins of the nation are in the tight grip of an inner priestly clique. They have cunning skill in extracting gold for their personal exchequers. They make a record for grip and cunning.

The Man Comes.

In true Oriental fashion there is a man sent ahead to herald the coming Man. The temper of the time, and of the nation, is clearly seen and felt in the throngs that hasten, at his vibrant call, to the Jordan waters.

And the Jerusalem official leaders mingle in the crowds. They are shrewdly trying to appraise this latest mood of the intense throngs. Cunningly they cudgel their brains to turn it to their own ends. Everything must be made to pay tribute.

One day in the thick of the thronging crowds a Man comes. He is a man. That's plain enough, at a glance.

But, *but*, there is a purity, a strength, a nobility, a beauty, an unconscious dignity, never seen, in any face or pose before.

There's a something yet more in the mere presence of this newcomer, an indefinable but unmistakable something. It gives a strange inner tug of unworthiness to the bold preacher of righteousness.

Quietly, this man moves down as though to join those waiting their turn in the roily waters. An instinctive protest comes quickly to the Baptizer's lips.

Quietly, with an unconsciously masterful mien the stranger speaks, "Let it be so. It is fitting that I should thus ally myself with you and your work."

And as they come up out of the waters, there was seen a rift in the upper blue. And John saw the Holy Spirit, as a dove, come upon this

unrecognized man. Instantly John recognizes that this is the Coming One whose herald he was to the nation.

The Three-fold Rejection.

A simple dramatic scene took place one day at the Jordan. An unofficial deputation had come from the national leaders. John pointed to Jesus, and the words rang out, "Behold the lamb of God who beareth away the sin of the world."

It was familiar language to Jewish ears, with their sacrificial ritual. It fitted peculiarly into the common thought of all men, everywhere, always.

Yet it clearly grated on official ears. They wanted a Messiah to throw off this hated Roman yoke, and lead to great glory among the nations. What was this sentimental stuff about a "lamb"!

They listened with the cold contemptuous silence of rejection. Thus he is openly presented to the Jew nation as The Chosen of God. And thus he is as openly rejected, contemptuously, scornfully, decisively, rejected.

For a year Jesus waited in and near Jerusalem. He waited for recognition and acceptance as the nation's Messiah, God himself come as a man.

He did a strategic, characteristic thing when the Passover brought the Jew pilgrim thousands from over the earth. With the slight touch of a corded whip he started out the livestock, on sale for the annual sacrifices.

With indignant flash of eye he drove the quailing money-grabbing traders out of the sacred precincts. The national leaders never could forget that day. It touched their pocket nerve in the raw.

Their hatred steadily hardened with that stinging rebuke. Already the unmistakable "sign" of power, so cynically asked for later, had been given, and an unwelcome sign of purity, too.

The imprisonment of his official herald, John, had just one meaning to Jesus. It meant himself. He recognized the danger signal. But his "hour was not yet come."

He "withdrew" (ominously significant word!) to the safety of Galilee. For a year and more Galilee rang with joyous praise, as he helped and taught countless thousands.

His contemptuous rejection by the Jerusalem clique now hardens into aggressive rejection. They hound his steps, seeking to poison the common crowds against him. And now, his imprisoned herald is beheaded. And again he "withdrew" to fugitive safety, yet ever healing and teaching.

Events thickened. They climbed up to a terrific tragic climax. The entry into Jerusalem is an open offer of himself as the nation's Messiah-King. And the leaders understood. Their hate now decided them on the third stage of rejection, murderous rejection.

He yielded to them at the last. Else they had failed then, as ten or eleven times before. And so his death meant just what he meant it to

mean. He said it was for others, in the distinctive sacrificial sense.

It is most striking that, through the Roman governor's action, he was crucified as a king, *the* King, the Messiah-King of the Jew nation, so long heralded in their Jewish Scriptures.

He left that new-hewn tomb sheer empty. No one of his own intimate inner circle expected it. They couldn't believe, for radiant joy, but they *knew* by touch and ear and eye.

The insistent protesting skeptic, in the innermost group, with actual touch of finger in the spear wound, breathed with awe in face and voice, " my Lord, and my God! "

The Puzzled Jew.

The four Gospels tell the story to four different sorts of men, at different times, in different parts of the world.

The first three have substantially the same group of events, but with characteristic differences and additions in Matthew and Luke, suited to the purpose of each.

Mark wrote the story as Peter used to tell it to the eager groups and crowds in Jerusalem and Judea. His is the simplest briefest telling.

There was a class of thoughtful earnest Jews who believed thoroughly in Jesus as their personal Saviour. They couldn't do otherwise. The facts so open, the unmistakable response in their hearts, so satisfying, quite settled the thing, *personally*.

But they were honestly puzzled. Their Jewish Messiah was to be the King of the Jews, and

lead them to world leadership. So their prized Scriptures said.

This Jesus had actually been crucified. It was a blessed fact, personally, that he had died as their Saviour. But what about the kingdom?

Matthew answers their puzzled questions, and he does it with rare skill. His answer is quite unanswerable. Jesus *was* the Messiah-King promised.

But he had been rejected by the clique who held the Jew nation in its iron grasp. They couldn't use him. He would not fight with their weapons, sheer brute force. He wouldn't go down to their level. He would reign over the nation only by the nation's free choice.

But the world vision was ever in control in Jesus. The refusal of the Jew nation to accept him as its Messiah-King necessarily meant that the kingdom plan was put off for a while. Free choice refused the King and the Kingdom.

But Love broadened and enriched the plan. The rejected Messiah of the Jews became the Saviour of the world. But the kingdom plan persists. As a matter of good faith, the King must return to carry out the kingdom plan. And he will.

When he does return it will again be as Messiah-King. And this time the Jew will choose to accept him.

It is Matthew who significantly records the words, at the close of that terrific arraignment of the Jew leaders,

"Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of

the Lord."[1] When he returns he will be joyously accepted by the Jew as his Messiah.

Matthew groups the events in a topical order suited to his objective. With studious care he traces the royal lineage, step by step, back to Abraham, their Jew ancestor.

The principles of the kingdom,[2] the distinctive power of the King,[3] the distinctive Jewish touch in instructing the Twelve,[4] the parables of the kingdom,[5] the terrific open arraignment of the Jew leaders,[6] these and like bits, stand out among the characteristics of Matthew. He takes pains repeatedly to point out that the events occurring are the fulfillment of the old Jew Scriptures.

Jesus the Human.

Luke writes his Gospel for the outside non-Jew world. Probably not a Jew, the one exception among the writers of the entire Bible, he has the outside non-Jew outlook, and feel, characteristically. Yet, even here, he is the companion and disciple, the understudy and penman of the great Jew, Paul.

With rare scholarly instinct, he does independent research work before penning his gospel. It is Paul's gospel, as Luke had heard it repeatedly from his lips.

It is distinctively the gospel for all the race of men. Jesus is a world man. He belongs to the race. It is a characteristic touch that his

[1] Matthew 23: 39. [2] Chapters 5, 6, 7.
[3] Chapters 8, 9.
[4] Chapter 10. [5] Chapter 13. [6] Chapter 23.

lineage is traced clear back to Adam, and to God.

It grew up, in outer form, in the outer non-Jew world, carefully verified by original research at the Jew sources. It breathes the free open air of the outer world.

Luke characteristically emphasizes the humanness of Jesus. He is a man, one of ourselves, a true full human. With utmost reverence a word may be used, in its old fine meaning, with peculiar appropriateness. It's the word *fellow*. Jesus was our fellow in the distinctive sense of the early Eden days.

There are distinctive touches of gentleness, of gladness, of sympathy with suffering, with the physician colouring, in Luke's narrative. Jesus' habits of prayer have frequent mention, and his temptations.

In all this the utter humanness of Jesus, and the common humanness of the circumstances of his life, stand out.

Jehovah-Jesus.

John's Gospel is quite distinct from the others. It was written much later. It was drawn out by the trend of thought within the Church.

It reflects, like a mirror, conditions within the Church at the end of the first century, the end of the second church generation.

It is chiefly taken up with teaching about the distinctive personality of Jesus. This was the thing being attacked, subtly, openly, boldly, persistently. This was the big trend in John's day. It was just starting.

The latest modern trend is the same as the earliest. The twentieth century and the first are in close touch here. The essential fight within church circles is the same.

Jesus' distinctive personality is the keynote in John's Gospel. This Jesus is the God of the creative week and of Eden, come among us as a man. He is the God of Abraham, the Jehovah of Moses, and so on, through the old pages.

A bit of homely reading from John's first page brings out clear, in the open, John's whole thought. Listen: God, no one has ever at any time seen. The Only Begotten Son in most intimate touch with the Father, he has always been the spokesman of God. In what he was, in what he did, in what he said, he was God talking out to man.[1]

Whatever modern scholarship may think of all this, yet we can all agree that this is the Story of the Book. And that is all we are trying to get at just now.

The Son of Man.

There is a very significant phrase on Jesus' own lips. It is the name he prefers for himself. It occurs more than any other on his own lips. It is "the Son of Man."

There is here a distinctive meaning peculiar to Jesus' personality. It is really Jesus' claim. It tells who he really was, what he really was, and why he had come.

That created man in Eden was the son of man,

[1] John 1: 18.

the typical man, so far as God *could* make him that.

He could *become* the son of man, the true human, actually, by using his power of free choice, when tempted, in choosing to choose only the right.

There he broke. At that critical point he fell down. He had the sovereign power given him of becoming in the very image of God *morally*, by his own action.

He could come into yet more intimate touch with God, by his own act, on his own feet. He could choose for himself as God chose for *him*self. He could choose the only right. So there would be a new likeness by choice.

It was a likeness that only man could make. God had gone as far as he could. Man must himself go the last step, if he would. And just there he failed to become *the* son of man, in the full human meaning.

Jesus uses this language of himself. He does it repeatedly. Almost ninety times in these few scant leaves he speaks so of himself.

Sometimes the phrase is actually put in sharp contrast with the word "man," as though to make it stand out in a distinctive way.

Jesus *became* the Son of Man by his own action. He used the power of free choice in choosing only the Father's choice. He did it under the subtlest fires of temptation.

He did it repeatedly, unfailingly, steadily, from earliest consciousness clear up to the Cross. And *so* he became, and continued to be, *the Son of Man.*

That phrase " son of man " clearly is the same as saying man, *man*, one typically, characteristically, a representative in himself of the human race.

The phrase, *the* son of man, clearly implies the one outstanding man, the one true full human, in personality, and in action.

There is a yet more significant meaning in this little phrase, simple, deep, most significant. It runs back to that bit in Daniel's first vision.[1]

It clearly looks forward to some future time. " Lo, there came One like unto *the* (or a) *son of man.*" And to him is given world-wide dominion.

The ancient Hebrew scholars all understood this passage as referring to the coming Messiah-King. Daniel's third vision actually uses the word Messiah (the Anointed One) for this son of man.[2]

The most common term in use for the Messiah, when Jesus came, was " the Son of Man." Its use by Jesus for himself is a quiet, bold, clear, claim that he was the Messiah-King. So the thoughtful intelligent Jew, of that day, would understand.

Jesus had a fine truly humble consciousness of his own distinctive personality. That word humble means understanding one's true relation to God, and to others, and being true to it.

Jesus plainly was quite aware that he was the one spoken of in the Daniel vision, and so throughout the prophetic pages. He was *the Son of Man* who would reign over all the earth.

[1] Daniel 7: 13–14. [2] 9: 25.

The Human Touch.

Jesus is the new Leader of the race. The first one failed, failed badly, failed utterly. Yet in failing he was still the leader. The race walked in his footsteps.

Jesus is the new Leader. He is distinctively, the new racial Leader. He chose true. He chose the Father's choice. His choice was shot through and through with red sacrificial blood. The victory was blood-marked. The scarlet markings are unmistakable.

In a simple Christian home, the daughter, a young child, was being put to bed. It was a threatening night. Clouds had gathered. An occasional lightning flash and distant mutterings told of a storm.

As the mother tucked the child in, leaving her in the bedroom, she quietly reminded her not to be afraid if the storm broke. "God will take good care of you, dear," she said.

Then the storm broke, with fierce flashings, and awesome thunderings. And the child cried out for her mother. And as the mother comforted the frightened child, she said gently, "You know dear, I told you God is right here, and he will take care of you."

And the child made a very simple reply. She said, "Yes, mother, but you know, when it thunders like that a little girl wants somebody *with skin on.*" She longed for the human presence, the warm human touch, the gentle human voice.

I wonder if I might, with utmost reverence, and in a hushed voice, repeat the child's simple

homely language. Listen softly: Jesus was God coming in amongst us "*with skin on.*"

He was God himself, a real man, come for the human touch. He gave it. And he gives it. And everywhere, where men come into touch with this Son of Man, their hearts are content.

And only so.

4. The New Messenger, To the Traitor Jew, and To the Prodigal Race—The Church, and Its Breakdown.

The Story: The Book of Acts

The Throne in Action.

The real is never seen. It is felt, felt into the inner spirit. The unseen is the real. Only spirit is real.

Now, the unseen Throne is in control of the new earth program. The Man of the Cross is now the Man of the Throne. Unseen, he is in action.

He grips the new situation on earth at once, with a firm decisive grip. He picks a new messenger for the new task.

It is to be a messenger plenipotentiary, that is, with *full power*. Only there is now to be a new meaning in both words, "full" and "power."

It's a called out, or "picked out" messenger. It is to be chosen not by family line, nor social standing. It is picked out strictly on the principle of free choice.

The common word in use for this new mes-

senger is "church." The word actually used is significant. It is strictly a *picked out* group of men and women, "called and chosen."

They are picked out on the basis of their own picking out. Those who pick out this Jesus as Saviour and Master are picked out by him. They make up the new messenger.

They choose Jesus as Saviour and Lord. They are chosen by him as distinctively his new messenger. They are chosen because they have chosen.

It's this principle of personal choice that is peculiarly characteristic of this new messenger. This is a new principle of selection, in part.

Abraham was chosen as the ancestor of the Jew messenger because he chose to follow that call that came in Ur. And the principle of choice runs through the old Jew line.

But, characteristically, it's the family line that decides there. The selection of the Jew messenger is within fixed limits. It follows the family line.

This new messenger ignores family and national lines, pedigree and lineage. It is wholly a matter of personal choice. Free choice comes into a new prominence in the story. Family lines fall out.

A man was born into the Jew messenger nation, by natural generation, regardless of his personal choice. A man became a member of the new Church messenger, by being born again, *through* his personal choice.

Hitherto there had been a division of all men into two distinct groups, Jew and non-Jew or

Gentiles. Now there are three groups, Jew, Gentile, and Church. It is simply a new grouping of all men. But it is significant.

The Church is made up of both Jew and Gentile. Anybody, anywhere, any time, who chooses Jesus the Christ as his Saviour, becomes by that choice a member of this new Church-messenger.

The Jew messenger had a simple single mission, to hold the light up high and clear so all could see. The new Church messenger has a two-fold mission. It is to carry a message to the Jew, and then to all others.

The Jew comes first. For the Jew is to be reinstated, some day, as the messenger to all the race.

The traitor Jew will become a radically changed Jew. He will be a rarely faithful Jew, true to his great Jew Messiah-King.

When that takes place the Church will have the place of honoured service as the executive of the Jew kingdom. Meanwhile the two-fold errand runs evenly along, to the Jew first, and also to all others.

The distinctive mission of the new Church messenger is to carry to all men, everywhere, the new message. It is to foster and strengthen and culture all who freely choose Christ as Saviour. So the Church would be continued until its peculiar mission was carried out.

The message of the new messenger is as plainly, clearly marked. It is to tell of Jesus the Saviour, crucified, risen, and actually, actively, present, in the person of the Holy Spirit, with those who choose him.

The Church is to stick to this message, under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit, until things are ripe for the Saviour-Messiah-King to return for the next step in his broader racial plan.

The Jew Church Calendar.

This new messenger has a birthday, of course. That birthday starts its calendar. The calendar will mark the beginning of its life.

It is most striking how the old Jew calendar and this new Church calendar dovetail. It is natural that they should. For the Church is the child of the Jew nation, its own born child, its direct lineal descendant.

It picks up the task the Jew has failed in. It picks up the torch light that has fallen from the self-palsied traitor Jew fingers.

The Jew calendar ran around three events. It began with the night of departure out of Egypt. On that night the sacrificial lamb was slain. And on that night they went out of slavery. The two were coupled, then and ever after.

Because God, visiting righteous judgment on Egypt, had *passed over* the Jews' homes, with their blood-sprinkled door-jambs, the annual sacrifice was known as The Passover. So their year, their calendar, their life as a distinct nation began.

There were two other outstanding points in their calendar. The Feast of First Fruits came fifty days after the Passover. And so it came to be known as *Pentecost,* the fiftieth.

A bit later came the harvest-home, as we Anglo-Americans call it, the Feast of Tabernacles or booths, they called it, from the plan of observance. It was really the *Full Fruits*, following the initial first fruits at Pentecost.

It becomes of striking significance that Jesus was crucified on the Jewish Passover day. So he is our Passover slain for us.

Their First Fruits, or Pentecost Feast, and the Christian Pentecost, the outflooding of the Holy Spirit, are joined in like fashion. It was when the Jewish day of Pentecost was fully come that the Holy Spirit came flooding down.

So the two calendars, Jewish and Christian, are linked and dovetailed. There remains one Jew festival yet to be marked, in like manner, on the Christian Church calendar.

When the Christians' Saviour and Lord, who is also the Jews' Messiah-King, and the race's true Leader, when he comes, to finish up the racial end of his earth task, that will complete the calendar union.

Then will be the *Full Fruits*, corresponding to the Jew Feast of Tabernacles. Church, and Jew, and all the rest of the race, will together know the full fruits of the Saviour's plan. Then will be God's floodtide of blessing, a harvest home indeed. Then Joel's prophecy will have its full fulfilment.

The story of the new messenger, the Church, is told in the Book of Acts. The name "Acts" is full of meaning. It means *doings*.

The Gospels tell of what "Jesus *began* both to do and to teach." The "Acts," what he *con-*

tinued to do and teach, through the Holy Spirit, and through these men and women.

The "Acts" is the "Joshua" of the New Testament. Each records a conquest, a taking possession of new territory. Each has a spreading of the message, each a holding up high of the light. The key word of each is the same, "victory."

The Book of Acts falls naturally into two parts. The first centers in Jerusalem, among the Jews, and around Peter the Jew leader there.[1] The second centers at Antioch, among the Gentile Christians, and around Paul, the Church leader to the outside non-Jew world.[2]

That first group of pages fairly throbs with intensity. A new life is being born into the race. A new shining of that blessed old light blazes out.

A very old, blessedly old, message, begins a new sounding out to the farthest centers and corners of the race.

One intense happening crowds in on the heels of the one just before, yet always with orderly rhythmic step. One's breath gets faster as he reads, and lives over, these wondrous birth happenings and days.

There's Jesus' promise of His Other Self, the Holy Spirit, coming upon these waiting men and women. There's that word "witnesses," those who *know,* by eyes and touch, and experience. They tell what they know. They tell with both lips and life. They tell even at the cost of life.

There's the worldwide mission. It is most

[1] Chapters 1–12. [2] Chapters 13–28.

striking. "In Jerusalem;" that's the home folk. "In all Judea;" that's the neighbours. "In Samaria;" that's the folks you don't like, and can't get along with. "The uttermost parts of the earth;" that's everybody else. That's quite detailed and sweeping.

Then the eleven young men, on Olivet's top, stare with rapturous eyes, as they see some higher law of the upper world taking precedence of the lower law of gravitation.

Jesus quietly yields to the gravity upward of his spirit toward the world Throne. That is to be the center of all Church activity down here, until the time is ripe for the new step in the racial program.

The Church Birthday.

And then, *and then,* there's the indescribable Pentecost Birthday. The rushing mighty wind, the tongues of flame, one upon each, and the praising, and telling the new old Story, in all the languages, of all the earth.

There's the world a-listening, with staring eyes, and thrilling ears, and throbbing hearts. The pilgrim thousands from every center and corner of the earth crowd in, a-gape, awed, amazed, perplexed, critical, some of them.

And then comes Peter's bold, simple, clear explanation, and personal plea. And then the glad acceptance by thousands among these pilgrim Jews.

Events pile up breathlessly. The power actually giving overflowing life to paralyzed limbs, the new wondering, the ringing out of the Jesus

message, the angered arrogant officials, the new sort of spirit marking these accepting, choosing thousands.

Then the ugly trail of selfish hypocrisy within the inner circle, the intensifying opposition, and then Stephen's ringing historical review and stinging rebuke, and the stoning outside the city wall, these follow in quick step.

The Jew opportunity had with rare graciousness been lengthened out. But stubbornness has ever a strange strangle-hold. They had crucified their Messiah-King. Now, in effect, they stoned the Holy Spirit in the person of Stephen. They slammed the door shut with the violence of finality.

Their bitter spite spills and spits out afresh. Fierce fires of persecution lead to the scattering of other fires.

The Jesus fires kindle and flame, literally everywhere, within Jewish range. Even far Ethiopia is kindled in a peculiarly strategic way that likely touches all interior Africa.

And then the Saul-Paul incident on the Damascus road is thoughtfully unanswerable. A more dramatic thing than this, of the leading Jew persecutor of the new Christian Church, almost overnight, becoming the leading exponent of the persecuted faith, this is tremendous, unanswerably tremendous.

And then a Jew actually opening the Gentile door into *fellowship*—this is the height of dramatic intensity, to one who knew the Jew.

The hinges of that door were heavily rusted. Knob and lock and all were all overgrown, en-

crusted with ages of Jew seclusive arrogant insolent superiority.

Yet the door opens. It opens from the Jew side. Slowly but surely, with halting and sticking, with many a groan and protest, still it did open.

It opened clear back to the whole outside Gentile world. That was certainly a psychological miracle, *if* you knew the Jew.

There are two scatterings of the intense fires. And in turn they burn to the farthest racial horizons. One was started burning by intense hate. The other, graciously kindled by intenser love, started earlier.

There is exceptional strategy in that first scattering, love's scattering of fires. It reveals the matchless strategy of the Holy Spirit. It tells of that Man on the Throne in action.

Those pilgrim thousands had scattered back home. They had come, as usual, from the very ends of the earth. Now they go back home, but changed, flamed with a new holy intense fire.

Look at this Pentecost strategy, afresh, for a moment. Some five thousand are involved at least. They are men, the natural leaders. They are Jews, the most intense racial group.

They are chiefly from cities, the dominating population centers. They are from every city center, as well as from every corner of the earth, literally. It is actually an earth-wide, a race-wide group.

They are devout men, pilgrims to the Passover Feast. They have witnessed with their own eyes the crucifixion of Jesus. Many of

them, maybe most, as many as five hundred in one instance, have actually seen and heard Jesus after his resurrection.

They have gone through that indescribable experience of the Holy Spirit flooding down, the rushing mighty wind, the tongues of flame, the speaking in every common foreign language known, the ringing message of the crucified, risen, Jesus-Messiah-Christ told with exuberant praise.

Now, these men are scattered, literally scattered everywhere over the earth, aflame with the Holy Spirit's presence, and the tremendous fact of a crucified risen Messiah-Saviour.

Every city center and country center of the earth heard the story, saw evidence of a supernatural power, *felt* the power in touch, actually felt it, unmistakably a supernatural power.

The whole earth was aflame with the story and the power. The grapevine telegraphy never did quicker farther reaching spreading of news.

These who have chosen Jesus as their personal Saviour, these make up the new messenger. Membership is by choice, choice of Jesus as Saviour. They are the Church.

It's a scattered Church, blessedly scattered, yet with a rare oneness of spirit and passion. It's a great birthday that, nineteen hundred years ago. If, now, the planned anniversary might know a fresh touch of that birthday power!

It is most striking that the first telling of the Jesus-message to the outside Gentile world is by some of these scattered pilgrim Jews. It was

by men of Cyrene and the near-by Cyprus who had witnessed the Jerusalem events.

They begin preaching "the Lord Jesus" to the non-Jew outsiders. They seem instinctively led in spirit. Without doubt the Holy Spirit was prompting them, and they following the inner prompting. The movement grew, fostered by Barnabas and Saul. And so the great Gentile Church at Antioch was begun.

The second part of this Church Story centers at Antioch, cultured Antioch on the Orontes. It gathers about the person of Paul. It reaches out and out to the farthest racial rims, in and in to the classical world centers.

The Jerusalem Church was essentially, likely wholly, Jewish. The Antioch Church was characteristically Gentile, though largely under Jew-Christian leadership. The whole Church at large becomes predominantly Gentile, non-Jewish.

The Antioch World Center.

There's a picture of the Antioch Church, rare in its fine simplicity. It would seem to be the Holy Spirit's own thumb print, or remarque, of the Church as he meant it to be.

There is pictured a rarely representative group. They are notable men, personally, racially, and in leadership. Reverently, quietly, they are *waiting on God,* possibly in deep devout silence, worshipping, praying, praising in heart, and absorbed in thinking about their wondrous Lord Jesus, and ours.

They become aware that the Holy Spirit is speaking to them of something he wants them

to do. Soft as Hermon's dews, clear as the tones of a vibrant bell, the word comes, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." [1]

Their understanding of the leading is quite clear and mutual. At once they obey the word. In a season of devout waiting on God, and praying, with the quiet solemn laying on of hands on these two, they send them forth.

What a rare recognition of the Holy Spirit's dominant presence in their midst, and of his leadership! What a rare spirit openness to his leading!

What simple quick unquestioning doing as he bid! What tremendous results followed! What a picture of the true Church as he meant it to be through the ages!

The rest of the book is taken up with the errand thus started. There are three journeys, lengthened out, going step by step as led by the Spirit, spreading the glad tidings. The first two end at Antioch, the starting point. The third merges into the journey to Jerusalem, and then to Rome.

These travels are all athrill with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, in the thick of terrific, devilishly persistent opposition.

There is given here a rare description of the Church's understanding of the broad plan being worked out. It is at Jerusalem, the mother Church.

A conference is gathered regarding the tense Jew-Gentile controversy, which never downs,

[1] Acts 13: 1–3.

with some. It's an unfailing bone of contention, ever being gnawed, by some. Now, they are quite harmonious in the understanding gotten at. The air is quite clear for future action.

There are three items in the understanding they are agreed upon. There was to be a taking of the Jesus-Saviour news to all the outside Gentile nations, that so there might be a people "*taken out*" through glad personal choice.

Then, there is to be a renewal of the David Kingdom, under the Messiah-King, and, then, *through* this David Kingdom, overspreading the earth, all the rest of mankind are to be told, that so they may choose.

In that Kingdom time, the Jew is in first place on the earth. The Church is first, in the actual presence of the King, and in the ordering of the Kingdom. The race has its first full opportunity, after long waiting.

The historic-prophetic outline here is simple, and clear, and most informing. It clears the air, sometimes a bit foggy. It is quite clearly the understanding of this first Church Council, at Jerusalem. It is accepted anew as the working program, the Holy Spirit's program.

We easily recognize that we are still living in that first stage. This is the Church period. The taking out of a people still goes on.

This is to be followed by the re-establishment of the David Kingdom. And the purpose of that David Kingdom is to spread the Jesus-Saviour message literally to all our brothers of all the race. (Acts 15.)

That first journey of Paul's was through Asia

Minor. The second crossed over into Europe, and takes in the classical cultural Greek cities.

The third centers at Ephesus on the dividing, connecting ridge between Orient and Occident, East and West. Ephesus was peculiarly a world city, commercially, and culturally. All tides came up on its beach. It was the London, the New York, of Asia Minor in its far reach, then, as not now.

The third journey merges into the Jerusalem experience of tense conflict with these stubborn-as-ever Jew leaders. And that in turn merges into the memorable journey to, and stay in, Rome, the world's throbbing center.

Acts is peculiarly the Holy Spirit book. The Old Testament is the Jehovah book. The Gospels are the Jesus book.

Acts, with the letters, growing out of it and fitting into it, is distinctively the Holy Spirit book. It is still being written, so far as it is, *if we are true.* At the far end we shall find the climax book of all, the Saviour-Messiah-King book, the Revelation.

Adding a Chapter to Acts.

This story of Acts runs through a generation of time. The Gospel story had run through a generation of time

This is significant. The reckoning in the whole Book is really not by our modern calendar count. It is by generations.

For a new generation means a new opportunity, a new racial opportunity. It means a new

throbbing of life from babyhood through to maturity.

It means a choosing, a choosing by a fresh arrival of humans. They come; they choose; they go out and up and in, as they have chosen.

The beginnings of the breakdown of this new messenger trace back to the beginning of the story. The seeds of it are in that seamy Ananias-Sapphira incident. We'll see the ugly weed growths, rank and poisonous, through the windows of the Epistles.

The story of Acts ends abruptly. It seems a singular abruptness, as though unfinished, broken off, with a ragged edge to the paper on which the story is written.

Then one understands that this is the Holy Spirit's touch. The story doesn't stop. It isn't meant to. It goes on and on and still on, *if we will.* It's the Holy Spirit's own plan. We may work with him in that plan, if we will.

Whatever some of our scholarly friends may think of some of these bits, yet we could all agree that it is the Story of the Book. And this is what we have started out to get.

I mean, of course, if we read the Book in the same simple straightforward fashion that the man in the street reads his insurance policy, or the deed to his dwelling.

It really is possible to be sane as well as saintly. Of course that combination is a bit scarce, sometimes.

An English missionary, in the heart of Africa, had had discouraging results. The people came. They came in throngs. They listened, and

looked, and—went away, wholly untouched, apparently.

One day they listened in their usual intent listless way. The missionary was talking about the words, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow from thee turn thou not away."

The leader of the village asked, "Do you believe your book?" "Yes," the missionary replied. "Do you live your book?" the man persisted. Wondering, the mission man again quietly said "Yes."

And then the native man very quietly said, "Give me this table." Another quickly said, "Give me this bed." And so, as though planned ahead, they went on, "this chair," "this bureau," and so on.

The missionary stared. This was a new phase of exposition. He was nonplussed. He bade them come in the morning for his answer. After thinking, and praying, and talking the strange request over with his wife, a conclusion was reached. They would yield to this puzzling attitude of the people, prayerfully yield.

The next morning found the crowd back, and soon the home was quite bare and empty. They slept on the floor that night. Happily the climate needed no bed coverings. There was a rare peace in their hearts, as sweet sleep stole consciousness away.

The morning came. And here came the natives, stringing down the road, carrying back the things they had carried away, with a new light in their dark-skinned faces.

"We wanted to see if you really would live your book," they said. "Now, tell us more." And a gracious turn came. They began accepting the Saviour, one after another, until the community was transformed.

And then they understood, when the missionary quietly told them that in that same talk they had picked up about giving, the Saviour had taught wisdom in giving. He said also "Give not ——."

I was telling that simple bit from Africa in a southern city. At the close a negro man came up to me. With bright face and shining eyes he told that he knew the story. His earlier home had been in that part of Africa. He knew the missionary, and he knew the Saviour. For years he himself had been telling the blessed story and trying to "live the book."

That is an added chapter of the unfinished Book of Acts. Each of us is to write a new chapter, if we will. This is the plan for finishing the unfinished "Acts." It is the Holy Spirit's plan. And he will lead us in the writing, *if* we will let him. And folks will read, and go to writing themselves.

Literature of the Church, Romans to Jude

The Intimate Touch.

The inner heart is revealed in personal intimate letters. A father writes his children as he would not write to any other.

This is the key, in the main, to this literature of the Church. In large part, it is made up of

the letters written by Paul to his spiritual children. In them he reveals his inner heart, and pours it out.

There are two chief writers of this literature, and a small group of others. Paul and John each stand out in prominence. And the small group is made up of James and Peter and Jude.

There are three centers where the writing is done. Paul's desk, wherever he was at the time out in the Gentile world, is one.

John in Ephesus, and the three, James and Peter and Jude, up in Jerusalem, make the third.

There are two chief periods of writing. Paul's writing runs through about fifteen years during the latter part of the second Christian generation, the latter part of the "Acts" period. And the three Jerusalem writers are, roughly, in this same time, toward the latter part.

Then, clear at the end of the third generation, John, up in Ephesus, and in Patmos off in the Ægean, writes his group.

Paul writes for these whom he has won out of the Gentile world, chiefly. The Jerusalem group write to the Jewish Christians there and everywhere.

John is distinctive here. He writes for the whole Church, and for every generation following that initial church generation, the second generation of the Christian era.

I am grouping Hebrews with Paul's letters. It could, of course, properly be grouped with the Jerusalem group writing to the Jews. The unknown writer is clearly a disciple of Paul.

He quite probably writes at Paul's suggestion, and under his tutelage. It really is Paul's distinctive message to the suffering Christian Jews, through this rarely gifted scholarly penman.

Writing on the Wing.

Paul dominates the New Testament literature, as Moses the Old. His letters naturally grow out of his preaching travels. And these travels make up the second half, the larger part, of Acts.

His writings begin during the second of these preaching journeys. There is a strong pull on Paul's tender heart toward the group of recent Christian followers at Thessalonica (the modern Salonika). There is a father's natural longing to strengthen his children, and to comfort them, regarding some questions pulling hard on their heart-strings.

And so in the thick of his tent-stitching and preaching at Corinth he takes time to write them. And they jealously preserve this first epistle received from their beloved spiritual father, Paul.

It is followed soon after by a second briefer letter. It is probably written because of personal letters received telling of conditions there.

There was some confused teaching about Jesus' return. And this is sent quickly to clear their understanding on this matter.

Some were insisting that Jesus' return was to be expected at any moment. Paul explains that certain events would precede the coming. We shall come to this again.

On Paul's return to his home church at An-

tioch he gets some troubling news. It is about the Christian groups in Derbe and Lystra, Iconium and little Antioch, and others.

These are the fruits of his first journey up in Galatia. They seem to have been of old Celtic, Gallic stock, these Galatian people, warm-hearted, quick temperamentally, rather easily swayed by intense leaders.

Paul's movements up in Asia Minor had been trailed by jealous hot-headed would-be leaders from the Jerusalem area. They are ever on Paul's heels, throughout the story, envious of his leadership and prestige.

They question Paul's leadership, and instil subtle doubts about how a man is saved. This controversial jealous trail turns up again and again throughout the story.

Saved by Doing? or—

Sifted down, this Judean controversy, as it has been called, is simply about how a man is saved. These disturbers said it is by something you do.

Paul insists here and elsewhere it is by something Jesus did when he died. These troublers insist that you do something to be saved. Paul insists that you do something, much, because you are saved.

It is really the ever present, never downed, controversy, everywhere in all the world, and always, up to now. Men are trying to be saved by something they do.

Paul insists it is by the tremendous something Jesus has done. The one turns one's thoughts in on himself, the other out and up on Jesus.

Then there is a glad joyous eager doing, with a song in the heart, and a swing in the step, *because* we are saved. This is the Galatian story, and setting.

The third of these momentous journeys centers in Ephesus, the London or New York of Asia Minor in those days. It's the longest period of this world evangelizing.

Ephesus was Asia Minor. All the tides washed in on that beach. And they all swept out from there to all that populous Asiatic world.

Ephesus was the heart. When and as that heart throbbed the blood pulsed to the outmost of that huge peninsula, fought over and fought for by every dominating power, Asiatic and European. There is rare strategy in this prolonged Ephesian activity.

Just over the stormy Ægean lay Corinth, a short water journey away. An intense year and a half had been spent in old Corinth, cultured, classical, lustful, in so many ways splendid, old Corinth.

Classical Old Corinth.

A large group had been won there to Jesus the Saviour. A rare saintly thoughtful earnest people they were. But it was inevitable that Greek philosophizing had crept in, or rather walked in boldly, as is apt to be the case, even yet, elsewhere.

And this had caused confused teaching and rival groups. This First letter to these Corinthian Christians is almost the longest of these letters of Paul's.

It is crowded full of practical advice, and passages of rarest beauty. That remarkable bit about the true relation between man and woman is here.

Here is that rare classic on love, and that matchless resurrection teaching, merging into its natural companion bit on the second-coming climax.

This letter causes great heart stirrings, and some heart burnings, in Corinthian Christian circles. That Judean jealous trail never fails.

Word of this reaches Paul's ears and brain and heart. Then the upset in Ephesus makes it clear that the work there has been well knotted up.

Now, in the thick of his going up and down the highlands and shore lands of Macedonia, he thoughtfully snatches time, away from tents and preaching, to write to these spirit children of his, to the south.

There seem really to have been three of these Corinthian letters. A second one had been sent off earlier, in the intensity of his love and longing to help. This one we call Second is pretty certainly the third.

It's a rare mingling of tenderness, gentle reproach, patient explaining of his own movements and sufferings, with some passages of exquisite beauty.

Warm-hearted exhortations crowd in on as warm approval, with much added teaching. There's the classical "earthly tabernacle" bit with its subtly rare teaching of the personal significance of Jesus' return.[1]

[1] II Corinthians 5: 1–9.

The World Capital.

It was probably a little after, while wintering in the more genial climate of Greece, that Paul writes his letter to the church group in Rome.

This is the longest of Paul's epistles, and the longest book of the new literature, and of the New Testament, except the Revelation. We shall come back to Romans in a little, when we gather up the broad teachings of this literature.

Just now it is interesting to note that when he is thus nearest to the world's capital in his travels his thought turns to Rome.

He has probably many a time longed to go there where the world's heart throbbed and beat. He has many friends there from all parts.

When he does go it is under wholly different circumstances from those he would naturally plan. He had been distinctly forbidden by the Spirit to "set foot" again in Jerusalem.

But his head was clearly set on a plan of his own regarding that. And so the travel to Rome came in a way not planned for him. But that's another story.

There's now a break of about five years in the writing. That Jerusalem plan stills his pen. When next he picks it up he is actually in Rome.

His travel expense is not paid by tents, nor by friends, but by the Roman government. It's a rather costly journey and stay to Paul.

In Rome, a prisoner, though graciously in his own hired house, he finds his pen. It has been gathering rust. But once cleaned up it is as incisive and subtle as ever. And its visions farther reaching in some directions.

Prison Letters.

There are four of these little letters in the prison group. One-chaptered Philemon is an exquisite plea for a runaway slave, who has become a Christian, and now is returning to his owner, who is likewise a Christian.

Ephesians is clearly a circular letter sent, not to Ephesus alone, but to the remarkable group of churches in the cities near Ephesus.

It is distinctively a prayer epistle. The old saint is writing on his knees. The connecting phrase is "for this cause I bow my knees."

His Spirit-touched imagination carries him off into parentheses, here and there. The vision of Jesus seated in the upper glory captures him anew, and sends him talking about his power loosed out for us down here.

The wondrous fellowship we have in the enthroned Jesus, and then Jew and non-Jew together, as rare fellows, here on earth, all this floods his spirit eyes.

It will take all of us together to take in all there is in Jesus and his love. And clearer visions of God's plan mingled with homeliest words about living true, in the commonplace round.

And his pen climbs to a climax in that great prayer paragraph.[1] We remain standing as victors on the battlefield with the unseen spirit forces in full flight.

The same cleaned sharpened pen carries a word to the sister church group at Colossæ. It

[1] Ephesians 6: 10–19.

is shorter. The prayer note is insistent with a new vibrance and intensity.

And his eyes are flooded afresh with the light that blinded him on that Damascus road. That throne Man is again looking into Paul's face.

Blind Eyes That See.

Or, does Paul's face turn upward more now that prison conditions hem in the outward view? These two prison epistles peculiarly reveal a rarefied spirit sight.

It recalls his word on the stairs to the Jerusalem crowds, "when I could not see for the glory of that light."

I have lost my sight;
I cannot see.
The glory light
Has blinded me.

The spirit sight
Sees all things true.
That soft clear light
Shines through and through.

I see the Throne;
The Man our own.
His power supreme,
Beyond my dream.

He patient waits,
That man may choose,
May quit his hates,
And not refuse.

I know him near;
He stills my fear.
He stays my feet,
On slippery street.

The music rings,
My heart e'er sings,
Through fog and slime,
Through waiting time.

The foe will quail;
He'll surely fail;
He'll sheer down cower
Through Jesus' power.

Soon He'll return,
To claim his own;
Begin his reign;
Sin's power slain.

(S. D. G.)

Paul's prison pen carries him to Europe, as his feet had done when free. Little four-chaptered Philippians seems to have been written because two people there, whom he knew, couldn't get along together. How modern it sounds.

But though this homely touch puts the pen in his hand what pictures are sketched! Each fresh epistle in prison brings a fresh vision of Jesus.

Here he is seen voluntarily coming down to the lowest depths of humility and shame. And then he is lifted up to the highest heights of power and glory.

The music throughout here is tuned in the major key. It bursts out in peals of joyous

shouts. "Joy" is the keyword with its variations.

A prison may become a symphony concert chamber when Jesus is allowed to pitch the music. It's as true of circumstance-walled prisons as of stone walls. And the crowds outside are always listening.

Free Again.

Then the prison doors swing wide, and Paul is at it again, a bit worn in body, but younger and hotter in spirit.

Have the darkening prison walls cleared his inner sight? It would be so, of course, for any one, and Paul misses nothing of this sort.

He has had two wondrous years in Rome, maybe longer. With his never flagging boldness the message has gone out to the ends of the earth, by voluntary personal couriers.

Now he seems to go from the world center to the world's farthest rim, old Spain. Where the Jew glory in later times was greatest of the scattered period, and the Roman Church fires burned most fiercely, there this Jew Christian explorer carried the blessed Jesus' gospel, in all likelihood.

Two brief personal letters, First Timothy and Titus, let us see his organizing skill, his thoughtful pastoral care, his yet clearer spirit visions of coming tendencies, and the strength of his personal attachments.

Then Rome's prison walls restrain his movements again. And the chill of prison damp maybe is back of that request in Second Timo-

thy for the cloak left behind at Troas. But no prison walls can affect his spirit, blazing, burning out, unconquerable, as ever.

Rare Old Hebrews.

It is probably in these later days of rarefied spirit vision that Hebrews was written. Here is, in all likelihood, the explanation of why Hebrews is anonymous.

This rare Hebrew Christian, with the old Hebrew ritual in his very blood, had had his eyes opened by Paul.

In frequent long talks together, not unlikely in Paul's later life when reflection cleared and illumined so much, this modest man came to see old things in clearer light.

He felt instinctively that he owed the illumination, humanly, to Paul. And he could never get the consent of his heart to attaching his own name to the Epistle. And yet his own individuality is so distinctive.

Hebrews is absorbed with the person of Jesus. This has become a passion with the writer, as with Paul and John. The deity of Jesus, and his utter humanness, are told in such rare fashion quite distinctive.

The book consists of a variety of comparisons and contrasts. The contrasts stand out boldest. Interwoven throughout are the urgent words of pleading that we be true to such a Jesus-Saviour as Jesus really is.

It is written at a time of sore persecution and sorest suffering. The temptation is a very subtle one to go back to their Jewish faith.

Its significant sacrifices, its exquisitely awesome ritual, its great names, and its greater glory; surely there could be nothing greater! Would they not better go back to the great religion of their fathers, Abraham and Moses?

With simple matchless skill this Hebrew, steeped in the rare old Hebraism, makes comparisons and contrasts. Through all, and at the climax of all, Jesus looms so big, so human, so truly God himself, that the air is vibrant with praise.

Let suffering come. It isn't worth bothering with, even while the knife jags in and the pain cuts deep, not worth speaking of in the presence of Jesus. That's Hebrews.

The Jerusalem Writers.

The small Jewish group of small letters are being written at this same time. Their writing centers in Jerusalem, the Jewish mother Church.

James, one of the brothers in the Nazareth home, who "did not believe on him," is now James the Just.

In accord with Oriental habit of thought, as well as because of force of character, he is the acknowledged leader of the Jerusalem Church.

He humbly speaks of himself as a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. The early perspective is fully corrected.

He uses his prestige, as head of the mother Church, to write to the Christian Jews scattered throughout the world.

These Jewish Christians were in the thick of persecution. It came doubly to them, from out-

side because they were Jews, from within Jewry because they were Christians.

And so this outstanding Jewish Christian leader of the Jerusalem Church writes to steady and strengthen and comfort them. The intensely practical absorbs him.

Faith has been spoken of so much that he seeks to strike the poise. He reminds them that faith is not simply upward but outward. The faith that stirs the heart also stirs hands and feet in helpful touch with one's fellows.

Peter writes two epistles. He is the great Jew leader of pentecostal days and after. He clashed with Paul sometimes, but he is working in rare harmony with him here.

For he sends his First Epistle to the groups of Jews in Asia Minor whom Paul's preaching has won. Like James, and like the old Peter of Gospel days, he is absorbed in the practical side of the Christian life.

The "Babylon" whose church greetings he sends might be on the Euphrates, or in Egypt, but more likely is the disguised reference to the terrible Roman system of tyranny whose hard hand was felt much by them all.

The Second Epistle was likely written much later. Peter and Jude are intimates in Jerusalem. The same outlook, and passion, grips them alike. Their epistles strike the same rhythmic minor chords.

The little one-chaptered Jude, written by this intimate friend and co-worker of James and Peter in Jerusalem, is intense. It seems to burn the paper.

It belongs, in spirit and maybe in time, in the heart breaking days within church circles, of which John later speaks so much.

Narrow-Broad John.

Clear at the end of this third generation, this first intense century of the Christian calendar, come John's writings. That same Ephesus in the outer world has become the home of this Jerusalem man and human intimate of our Lord.

He writes to the Church of all the world, and to all succeeding generations. Here he pens his Gospel, and Epistles, and the one distinctive book, unlike any other, the Revelation.

Just now we take a look at his three epistles. First John is like his Gospel, and the later Revelation, in one colourful particular. It begins with Jesus.

John had only one text when he preached, Jesus. John had only one theme when he wrote, Jesus. Just a bit narrow, John was.

But when you get the circumference of Jesus' personality measured you know the width of John's narrowness, for he always talked and wrote of him.

A simple paraphrase of one little bit may help a little to understand John's outlook in this First Epistle. It comes in where John is saying that we should listen with discerning ears to Christian preachers and teachers.

They may be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, John says. *Or,* they *may* actually be inspirited by the anti-Christ spirit, the very opposite.

Here is the clue John gives to guide our ears: Every one that openly stands for this, that Jesus—the anointed Messiah of the old prophetic pages—is indeed come amongst us as a man, *he* is being swayed by the Holy Spirit.

And every one that does not worship Jesus, or, who thus annuls Jesus, is not of God. And this is the very inner essence of the anti-Christ spirit.[1]

John's Second and Third Epistles strike this same note. It is this disciple of love who bids us not have Christian fellowship with any that is not true to Jesus.

One may share his last crust, and penny, with a hungry man regardless of race or creed. But there can be no Christian fellowship with one who plays the Judas part.

The Person of Jesus.

Now, it becomes of intense interest to gather up the essential teachings of these twenty-one epistles. For there is a strangely rare symphony of agreement in their teaching.

Sift through these little pamphlet books, stand off a bit for the broader lines and clearer perspective, and certain things, a few things, stand out sharp and distinct.

There are just three of these main teachings. They are the great strands of the warp. Into this warp are woven all the shuttle-threads making up the fabric.

The first of these is about the person of Jesus. It is put first in count, and it *is* first in teaching.

[1] I John 4: 2–3.

It is first in the brains and hearts of these writers. Whether Paul or John, James or Peter, they all agree on this.

They are quite clear that he is the Jehovah God of the creative week, and the Horeb Mount, and the glory Cloud on Tabernacle and Temple.

When things had gone clean bad, and worst, he came in amongst us as a man, the one true full human.

When the person of Jesus is clear, at once what he *did* becomes clear. What he really did when he died, what he did when he got through with the new-hewn tomb of rock, this all clears.

It's like clear shining after rain and fog and cloud. This is item one in the broader teaching, first in count, first in meaning, and first in power.

The Personal Christian Life.

The second bit stands out as clear. It follows that first as fragrant dew follows the still cloudless night, as new shining follows the daybreak, as new life follows life sacrificially spilt out.

It has to do with the personal Christian life. There is such a life. It comes through Jesus. It comes through free choice of him as Saviour.

It comes in the actual habit of life through his Holy Spirit living in us. He makes actual in us what Jesus did for us.

It is a life of deep peace within, and full victory both within and without, in the midst of tensest conflict.

This comes second. Jesus first, the new per-

sonal life of peace and victory a quick glad second. We second him in our free choice. He comes first for us, and in us, and with us, and through us.

These men writing all tally here. Their tally sheet is quite clear here, whether James or John, Peter or Paul; better James and John, Peter and Paul.

The Broad Program.

And the third thing quickly follows hard and fast on the heels of first and second. There's a broad program of action being carried out. It all hinges on free choice, man's free choice.

Because of man's free choice freely choosing, that Eden gate was shut, for future use. Because of free choice man got into desperate bad shape.

Then that creative Eden Man freely chose to come in person to straighten things out. He did it the only way it could be done. Only through life given could life be gotten.

Man was given yet more light to see the right. Power to choose light was loosened out a-fresh. And a fresh racial start was given free swing, that man might make good, in choosing right.

Some day things will go bad again. It will prove to be the worst bad yet. Then that Eden-Calvary Man will come again and give things a fresh start.

Man will have the very best chance yet, over all the earth, to see straight and clear. Love will gently, persistently woo him anew to choose the one right choice.

Then will come the really Edenized earth. In a swift simple word this is the broad program rung through the pages of this church literature. Clearly these epistles are meant to characterize the whole church period.

Whatever our cultured scholarly friends may think of some, or of all of this, yet we can all agree on this much, that it is the Story of the Book.

That is to say, if one reads the story straight along, taking the surface meaning, this is clearly enough the Story.

When we begin to explain we begin to split up. If the story is taken as it runs there is a singular unity of meaning.

Romans Close Up.

A drop of wine gives a flavour of the cask. A gleam of light has all the qualities of the sun. I want to take a look at one of these little letters, for they are all little.

It will be the one standing at the front door, the one at first hand. Paul's Romans keeps guard at the front door, and then becomes an intelligent friendly guide.

Romans is Paul's review, world review. It is written when his powers are at their ripest. Hebrew blood and training blend with Greek culture.

Actual touch with world currents, in the intimate friction of actual life, stern self-discipline, all this, on the human side, has rarely trained eye and ear, mental powers and spirit.

It is likely in the more leisurely winter hours

of southern Greece, or as near to leisure as Paul ever got, that he dictates this review, and sends it to his known, and more unknown, friends at Rome.

That tent-stitching and fixing must have helped. Tennyson's "measured language" "for the unquiet heart and brain," and the "mechanic exercise numbing pain," have fine psychology.

The rhythmic twining of the long needle in and out the canvas would quiet the actual nerves, and clear the mental vision.

Quiet thinking clears the perspective. The broader lines stand out. Knitting fingers help puzzled and puzzling brains, and oft quiet the spirit. That Nazareth carpenter shop was likely a brown study, and the carpentering the better done, too.

Romans is a remarkable world review. It is racial, Jewish, Church, and future. Rather a wide sweep that. The racial comes first, for background. Man sees certain things clearly.

The unseen things are clearly seen through the seen things. God is a faithful Creator. His light never ceases shining.[1] Paul knew by touch. He had touched intimately the whole Pagan world at its lowest.

Man has chosen, as he has, in the face of clear light. God gives him free swing. He won't withdraw that gift of free choice, not by the smallest fraction of a slender hair. That's chapter one.

Faith-Fruit.

Then the Jew threads are gathered up, and

[1] Chapter 1: 19, 20.

noted. And Paul knew the Jew world by feel, inner and outer.

The Jew set himself up as judge of all, superior, of a different breed. Yet he did the very things he condemned in others. That's chapter two.

The Jew is greatly privileged above all men in the errand entrusted to him. Yet in actual conduct he had been untrue. His utter failure in conduct put him on the common racial level with the outer Gentile crowds.

It is only through the blood shedding of Jesus that a new sort of righteousness, a faith-righteousness, could be had. The Jew was forced to the common level of all men in his sore need of a Saviour. That's chapter three.

The great illustration of this is none other than their great Jew ancestor Abraham, whose memory they worshipped. He was saved, personally, not by what he could do, but through his faith. That's chapter four.

Then there is the blessed result of a simple heart-faith in Jesus. Through our faith, all that his blood does comes to us. There is the heart peace, full touch with God again, and his love flooding heart and life. That's chapter five.

Then there will be the actual living of a pure holy life, the desire, and the power. That's chapter six.

Anybody trying to get saved any other way will get into sore trouble. Through Jesus' blood shed for us, and the Holy Spirit's touch of power in actual life, and both through our choice, the first choice and the habitual choosing, through

this there is salvation. And this is the only way. That's chapter seven.

And the blessed flood of results piles up a climax in chapter eight. It begins with "no condemnation" for us.

It ends with no separation from Christ. And all things working together for us, as we keep true to the Spirit's guidance, this fills all between.

The Jew Section.

Then comes the great Jew section. It makes clear the broad program being worked out. The Jew nation had utterly failed.

The plan was that through the Jew the Messiah-King would come, establish the Jew Kingdom, and through this bring blessing to all the race.

The plan hinged on the Jews' free choice of Jesus as their Messiah. They chose. They chose to reject him. Their action was suicidal. In rejecting their Messiah-King they were automatically rejecting themselves as the world's saviour-nation.

But God, Love, isn't done with the Jew. They were not *utterly* cast off. God's love made a margin, a saving margin, to their rejection, self-rejection.

Some day the Jew will voluntarily accept Jesus as their Messiah-King. Then they will be reinstated in their world mission.

And the coming kingdom will be a Jew Kingdom, under the Messiah-King. And through this the great flood-tide of blessing will come to

all the race, and the earth. That's chapters nine and ten.

And meanwhile, as regards the salvation of individual Jews, they are on the same blessed level as all others. A Jew may accept Jesus as his Saviour if he will choose to.

So he comes into the Church. And in the Kingdom time the Church has the first place in the Kingdom service in all the world. The Church leads in the administration of the Kingdom. That's chapter eleven.

The Knotted End.

Then the knot on the end of the thread, a big knot, has to do with the personal, practical, every-day, living the Christian life. That's chapters twelve to fifteen.

And the tender personal touches at the very end let us see how much the personal touches meant to this great Christian philosopher and teacher. That's the closing chapter.

And, so, this rare blend of philosophy and of practical touch with actual life, so it weaves in and out, through all those three main teaching warp-threads of the fabric of this literature.

The person of Jesus the Anointed of God, Messiah-Saviour-King, this is first of all. Who he was gives the distinctive meaning to what he did when he died.

Through simple choice of him as one's personal Saviour there is salvation assured, and sweet peace within, and power to live true in all outer contacts.

And there's the broad program working out.

The present is the Church period. It will be followed by the Kingdom time.

That will come through the actual presence among men again of Jesus. But this time it will be in his glory as Messiah-King.

The glory of the Transfiguration Mount, and the personal touches of the forty post-resurrection days, will have a gracious blending in his actual presence on earth.

The Jew will be back again in his world mission, God's messenger to the race. Those who choose Christ as Saviour now, and are serviceable, will have a hand in the coming Kingdom time.

Personal Touch Bests Logic.

May I again bring you a homely bit out of life? It is very homely. Yet it has so much of life, real life, in it. The deepest philosophy comes in homespun. The simplest psychology wears hand-pegged shoes.

William James, the famous psychologist-philosopher of Harvard, is directly responsible here. He was fond of telling some homely incident to illumine some abstruse principle of philosophy. One day, in class, in the thick of a rather abstract discussion he told this story.

There was a little country schoolhouse in a rural section of New England. One morning the teacher called on one of the young boys to recite. It was a class in fractions. The teacher knew all the children and their homes.

She said, " Jimmy, if your mother were dividing a pie; there's father and mother, Jack, your-

self, Sally, Susie, and Mary. How much would each of you get?"

And Jimmy slowly drawled out, "One-sixth."

And the teacher's brow knit, and in a provoked voice she said, "Don't you know better than that?" And she repeated the question, and said, "Don't you know fractions, Jimmy?"

But Jimmy stood by his guns. He was not to be swept off his guard by any show of impatience. Slowly he drawled out, "Yes'm. I know fractions—some. And *I know mother.* She'd say she didn't want any."

The teacher was right. And the law of arithmetic remained unaltered. But a higher law came in. And higher law always displaces a lower law, when they come in conflict. That's true in the natural sciences, and it's true here.

The law of the *personal touch* displaced the law of arithmetic in practical life. The boy knew he would have a larger piece of pie satisfactorily reposing under his waist-line when the pie transaction was concluded.

There's a humorous side to that. But there is more, far more, and deeper. May I remind you, with the quietness of deepest reverence, that the law of *personal touch* is the highest law in the spirit world?

Personal touch with Jesus as Saviour and Lord will change many a law of logical reasoning and theology. If we have that personal touch it answers many a question. And the answer satisfies our deepest longings. It's the key to this Book, and to life.

May we keep that touch ever fresh, as the

dew of the new morning after the clear still night.

For the crowd's sake.

Black on White.

But, *but*, there's another bit to add here. It's an astonishing bit. It's heart-breaking. Yet one tries to keep the warm colouring of his wishes, his heart, out of his eyes. Only so can he clearly see things as they really are.

There's a picture in these letters. It's an etching, black and white. It proves to be black *on* white. The white is a pure snow white. That makes the black show up; no, not blacker; just as black as black is.

It begins with an ugly smudge. It steadily darkens, growing in intensity. Then it is as black as midnight with all light almost gone.

Not wholly gone. The stars still shine in the night. But the black is really as black as sin. That's the last word in black blackness.

Yet it is striking that it is not all black. There's the white under the black. It shows the black up in all its smudging blackness. But the white is there. The very black makes the white stand out in its rarely pure whiteness.

With a sore ache at one's heart, one sees that there is a breakdown here. It's the breakdown of this new messenger. Breakdowns are contagious, cruelly so. The race, then the Jew, now this Church messenger to race and Jew; the contagion has spread.

Yet neither is complete nor final. The road does turn up after a bit. The gray does streak

up the east of a new day. The sun will yet reach noon-tide flood-light.

That first ugly smudge is in the Ananias story. It comes under the very awesome grip and spell of that gracious holy Pentecost Presence.

Selfishness creeps in. It pretends to be what it knows it is not. And this touches the holiest things, the yielding of all, voluntarily, to the mastery of Jesus. Of all hypocrisy this is the worst. Bad things get badder in holy touch.

A prayerful run through these letters, in the order in which they were written, shows this etching up plainly, with aching plainness.

The Heart-breaking Break.

The growing moral breakdown touches three main points. Lack of unity, moral conditions, and false teachings, these begin early, and steadily grow.

Lack of unity stands in sharp contrast with the almost unbelievable unity of the Pentecost days. There it actually touched their material possessions. That's the acid test.

Now, divisive tactics become common early, and intensify. Parties and cliques, with partisan pride, jealously eye and tongue each other.

Some prominent name is attached to each, Paul, Peter, Apollos, even Christ. That has an ugly yet strangely familiar sound. And this intensifies as things move along. There's a momentum, down.

It is significant that with this goes a second thing. There is a distinct break in moral conditions. This seems really most distressing of all.

It is really immoral conditions, and of the worst sort. It touches sexual relations, unnameable lust, orgies of dissipation, sharp wranglings, bitter jealousies, and all that brood. Some of it even creeps into their holy services at the Lord's table.

And a third of these quickly runs hand and glove in most intimate touch. That is, erroneous teaching, false teachings, positively wrong even blasphemous teachers and teachings. These center chiefly in the person of Jesus, the very center of the Christian faith.

Toward the close there is a strange loathsome phase of this. Teachers not only are influenced in their teachings by love of money, but they even teach lustful practices.

It's a hideous picture. But it is there. It is a relief to let brevity be the big emphasis in statement.

And it is most noticeable that this is common to the Church in all parts. The later Jerusalem leaders, Jude and Peter, almost scorch the paper in their denunciation of it in that center.

Paul in the far-away Gentile world speaks of it with pained plainness. It is marked in the earlier Corinthian letters. It stands out yet more boldly in the later writings, after the broader touch, and after his release from Rome.

And his Spirit-cleared eyes see things yet worse ahead.[1] A paraphrase makes his meaning clearer in plain English. The Spirit had spoken distinctly, emphatically, to his own inner spirit of the tendencies in coming days.

[1] I Timothy 4: 1–2.

Here are his words: Many shall fall away from the simon-pure faith in Jesus the Saviour. They will listen to seducing demons.

Yet more: There will be devilish things, taught by demons, through leaders in church circles, who really speak lies, and whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron.

Yet later there comes a grievous terrific arraignment of men and women *within the Church*.[1] It is better to read it quietly off alone than aloud.

John's First Epistle comes later when all this has headed up yet more. It touches chiefly the matter of false teaching within church circles.

A paraphrase of the touchstone for detection of these teachers has already been given. The prominence here indicates how common the thing was, even then.

The Latest Look.

But the climax to all this is a bitter, unbelievable, heart-breaking, climax in John's Patmos book, Revelation.[2]

And here, be it keenly marked, the words are spoken by the Man himself, with "eyes of flame," to whom the innermost things are as open as sunlight.

The seven-fold message to the Churches is a look at the entire Church, characteristically, throughout the world. There are some without reproach, suffering but true.

There are some zealous for the true teaching, but wholly lacking in the spirit of love. And

[1] II Timothy 3: 1–8. [2] Revelation 2, 3.

that lack disqualifies them for service. This is most striking.

Some are so faithlessly content, hugging their carefully hoarded gold, and the like, that they—it's such homely talk!—they cause nausea. They are spewed out, vomited violently forth. That's the language here, both Greek and English.

But there's yet more, an unbelievable more, yet it is here. Some actually there are within the Church giving instruction in lust, under religious guise.

There are not simply lustful practices, but actual teaching in unnatural sexual indulgence, and this within church circles, and by church leaders. And this is not merely what Paul foresees, but what the Man of Fire sees actually going on then.

One could never trust himself to tell the story were it not for the Book, and the living Spirit in the Book, and in the heart.

And these English words are really an understatement. The actual language used, and in great fullness and detail, both Greek and English, give much greater emphasis.

It is of intense significance to note that these three things run along side by side. There's an inter-play. Each is blood-kin to the others. Each serves to intensify the others.

Absence of the unity of love, gross immorality, actual Judas teaching, traitor teaching, about the person of Jesus, these run along together. One heart throbs in all three. One spirit drives them, not tandem, but a-team, side by side, in perfect step.

The Gray Streaked East.

But I said a bit ago that stars shine brightest in blackest night. That is, if the fogs and clouds don't hinder your eyesight.

And it is quite possible to have clear spirit eyesight here, *if* one is willing to pay the high cost of open eyes.

It's never all night. That Love-Man on yonder Throne, just there through the blue and the gray, he sees to that.

Nightfall plainly is seen in these letters. And it's been a long night, with gracious star-light and even some heaven-sent special stars to light the dark. But

> "It darkens to the *dawning*
> More than all the night.
> Earth's shadows cast an awning
> Just round the gates of light." [1]

Is the darkest dark at hand? Who can say? If so it's a sure thing that the breaking of the new day is at hand, too.

There's a sure touchstone given us here by which to steady our feet. It's back in that bit Paul wrote the group in Thessalonica, the second time.[2]

It gives the unmistakable clue to night-time, and daybreak. Paul is led to say there that our Lord Jesus will not return until the falling away in the Church has come.

And with this, and through this, the Lawless One will come out in the open in action. That

[1] Robertson of Brighton. [2] II Thessalonians 2: 1–12.

is Paul's title for the one John calls the Anti-Christ.

Restraint Gone—the Touchstone.

There is now, Paul goes on, a *restraint* in the world on the spirit of lawlessness, and on this Lawless AntiChrist.

That restraint, he plainly says, is by a person. The personal pronoun is used. Who is that person? There can be only one answer: The Holy Spirit *within the church.*

The distinctive thing about Pentecost was not simply the coming of the Holy Spirit to men. He was in the saints of Old Testament times.

It was his coming in a new rare fullness. It was his coming upon a company of men and women, uniting them into a new body, a corporate unit, acting as one. So the Church came into being by his indwelling presence in these united men and women.

That Church has been a gracious restraint upon evil in the world. Even through the dark times in Europe the Holy Spirit used the Church as a restraint on the spirit of lawlessness.

Some day that restraint will be withdrawn, Paul is led to say here. It will be through the Holy Spirit withdrawing from the Church, though never from individual believers.

That restraint once withdrawn lawlessness quickly comes to a head in a person, the Lawless-AntiChrist. He has his day, happily for the race a very short day. Then he goes as our Lord comes openly to earth again.

Has the Holy Spirit withdrawn from the

Church? It's a solemn question. Put the question in Paul's language: is the Church a restraint to-day on the world's spirit of lawlessness?

The answer to this second question is the answer to the first. It's not a time to talk much. Rather a time to use the knees more.

So, one may ring true, true to the person of Jesus. And so he may keep gently sweet in all his personal contacts.

That's the heart-aching story of the breakdown, and then the joyous turn up to a new day.

5. The Three-fold Crisis; of the Prodigal Race, the Traitor Jew, and the Swamped Church; and the Wondrous Clearance

The Story: Revelation 1: 1 to 20: 3

The Master-Key.

The sun is always shining above fog and storm. The blackest night can't shut out the new day. The storm may bring wildest disaster. But it will end. The flowers of spring quite cover up the ravages of ice and frost.

This gives the master-key to this story about a crisis, the crisis. It will come. Free choice ensures that, man's free choice. It's the bad ravelling out of the fabric of free choice.

It will run riot, like these recent Atlantic storms. Then, it will pass. The sun will shine. The fragrance of the flowers will sweeten the air.

The Throne above the blue will yet sway. The

Son of Man on the Throne will be discontent till his racial task is clean finished up. This is the master-key to this master-book—Revelation.

John's Revelation story has three distinct parts to it. They need to be kept distinct. Then the significance clears. The last impression proves most lasting.

There's the story of a crisis. That takes, by far, the largest space in the book. Then there is a wondrous aftermath to the crisis.

It runs a long, long time, in contrast with the short calendar of the crisis. Then that ends in another crisis, the last.

And then comes the brightest shining of all. It will be an Edenized earth, actually Edenized, with all the meaning that can be imagined, and more.

The knot on the end of this book's warp is big, and tightly knotted, no slipping of threads. And it is all of brightest pure-gold, yellow, glory threads dazzling in beauty.

Except, yes, *except* for a few grimy gray threads that free choice persists in weaving in, for free choice still reigns everywhere.

That knot, the glory of it, catches both eye and fingers and heart, too, as the Story of the Book closes.

The Jesus-Glory.

John's Revelation stands all by itself. It is utterly solitary among the several books of the Bible, in the way in which it comes to us.

All the other books are written by men, under the gracious guiding and inspiriting and control

of the Holy Spirit. This one does not come that way.

It is given directly by the Lord Jesus to John on little sea-girt, wave-washed, thunderous Patmos. This is simply, clearly told at the very beginning of this Revelation book.

A bit of free paraphrase, quite accurate to the thought underneath, makes this stand out. It tells, not only how the book was given to John, but why. And there's a world of meaning in that "why."

The first two clauses may be put as follows: This is a making known (or unveiling), ahead of the time, of the personal glory of Jesus, the Anointed-Messiah-Saviour.

This personal glory will be openly seen by all on the earth, the scene of his humiliation. It is simply the personal glory native to him, and familiar to the upper world.

It was the Father's wish and plan that this personal glory of Jesus should be seen *in these events,* by men, on the earth.

And the thing is done directly by Jesus himself because the Father wished to have him do it. And, in glory, as on earth, Jesus does always the things that are pleasing to his Father. All this is included in the two opening clauses of that opening sentence.

This makes clear the marked touch of—what shall I say?—modesty?—on the part of Jesus throughout the story.

It is really the fine humility of his earth days. In this he makes the actual *events,* the tremendous doings, stand sharply out. He seems to keep

himself in the background. He speaks of himself in the third person.

Even as one comes to see this, it is yet also seen that the glory of his person, his mere presence, the glory native to him, floods these brief pages.

Take a moment for a quick run through, tracing this. There are nine distinct touches here. At the first he simply opens ("unveils") John's eyes.

John sees Jesus. And John tries to describe this indescribable Man of Glory and of Fire, on that first page.

In the seven-fold description of the speaker to the Churches, there is the description suited to each particular message.

In chapter four John is "shown" things as they are in that upper world. All centers in the Jehovah-Creator as he was before coming to earth, and as he is now.

In chapter five, there is the other side, the human side. Jesus is seen as the Lamb, slain, stepping into direct action as the Son of Man, to straighten things out on the earth.

At the opening of chapter ten he is seen in action as a royal envoy plenipotentiary, spoken of in English as "an angel."

The description makes clear who this is. "The rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire."

At the beginning of chapter sixteen the "great voice," commanding the angels of judgment, in agreement with the "voice as of the voice of many waters," on that first page, and "a great

voice as a lion roareth," in the tenth chapter, leaves no doubt as to whose authority it is thus expressed in the very voice.

The doom on the Babylon system in chapter eighteen is by a royal envoy, " having great authority, and the earth was lightened with his glory." There is only one such, with no second.

There is no question about the Rider on the white horse in chapter nineteen. " His eyes (are) a flame of fire, and upon his head many diadems," and the four names, known and that cannot be known or fathomed.

And again at the close of the tense spirit conflict in the opening of chapter twenty the royal Executive has " the key of the abyss." At the beginning he talks about having the keys of death and of the spirit world. Now he is using one of them.

This simple brief run reveals the true meaning of humility. It's a matter of keeping true to one's relationship. And in all this Jesus is doing as the Father wished. They were in perfect agreement.

And in this exquisitely indirect way he does as the Father wishes. He is making known to us, through John, the glory that is native to his person, now in the upper world. Some day he will be seen thus on the earth, the place of his voluntary humiliation.

The Starting-Point.

This story told in the Revelation is divided into three parts. It is done by the Man with the " eyes " as " a flame of fire," and " the keys."

It is done for John's pen. We will simply follow here.

John is told to write down "the things which thou sawest." That is, this vision of Jesus as he is in the glory.

John's eyes have been unveiled to see Jesus as he is. Simply this, but this. That's enough. John's eyes are flooded with the light of Jesus' person as he is. That's chapter one.

Then he is to write "the things which are." That is, this seven-fold story of the Church. These letters or messages are simply a picture of the Church *as Jesus saw it.* Shall I add, as He *sees* it?

That's the outstanding thought. John sees the Church through Jesus' eyes of flame, from which nothing is hid. We have already talked about this etching of black on white. This takes in chapters two and three.

Then comes the third item in the story. It takes in all the rest of the book. It is "the things which shall come to pass hereafter."

And then there is given the starting-point from which this "hereafter" dates. It is in the description in chapter four.

There were "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven spirits of God." So the Holy Spirit is described here, even as in Isaiah's vision.[1]

This is most significant. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down to earth on the distinctive mission in and through the Church. Here the Holy Spirit is spoken of as being before the

[1] Isaiah 11: 2.

throne. The description and statement is distinctive and emphatic.

We have seen Paul's teaching that at some time the Spirit would be withdrawn from the Church. He had formed the Church by his presence, for its distinctive earth mission.

Paul puts this withdrawal as the turning-point. That withdrawal will be the withdrawal of restraint on the spirit of lawlessness, and on the Lawless-AntiChrist himself.

Now, this is put as the starting point of "the things which shall come to pass hereafter." The events forecast here begin with the withdrawal of the restraint on evil, through the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the Church, as the distinctive Church messenger.

The Broader Perspective.

It will make things clearer if we step back a moment, and get a look at the broader simple outlines here. That will keep clear both perspective and proportions.

The starting time has been given. Now the length of time covered by the group of events is mentioned. Jerusalem, "the holy city," is desecrated in a peculiarly repugnant way "forty and two months."

The two men witnessing there to the truth continue their unacceptable witnessing during twelve hundred and sixty days.[1]

The two periods are the same in length. And the plain inference is that these two things go on at the same time.

[1] 11: 2, 3.

The nondescript beast, clearly the Lawless-AntiChrist, runs his course through a similar period.[1] This would seem to fix the general length of time covered by the events being described about three and a half years, probably a little more, to cover all.

The geographical notes indicate the center of action, and the wide sweep of action. "The sea"[2] is the characteristic ancient way of referring to the Mediterranean.

The seven Churches are in the northeast Mediterranean basin. The armies of the nation gather in the plains of Esdraelon (Armageddon) in Palestine.[3]

There is intensest action at Jerusalem[4] for the full length of time indicated. The name Babylon is sometimes the city, and more often the world-system of evil.

That puts the broad center of action at the east end of the Mediterranean, with the immediate center in Palestine and Jerusalem. And it becomes clear that the sweep of the action is earth-wide.

The character of events is intense and really terrific. War, and famine, epidemics of disease, terrifically torrid weather, and an earthquake, the greatest yet in extent and in intensity, are named. And with all this is coupled the horrors of extreme religious persecution and martyrdom.

The common division of all men into the non-Jew, the nations, or Gentiles, and the Church, stands sharply out.

The Jew has become a national unit in these

[1] 13: 5. [2] 13: 1 et al. [3] 16: 14, 16. [4] 11: 8.

pages, centering at Jerusalem, while the far greater number is scattered throughout the earth. The temple worship, and the sacrifices being offered, make this re-nationalization clear.

The word " church " has two distinct meanings here. As seen in that seven-fold description the word stands for the whole ecclesiastical system, including the true followers.

In the other meaning it is the body of true believers both within and outside the ecclesiastical bodies. Here it retains the meaning of early Pentecostal days.

In this latter sense the Church is seen suddenly caught away, and up, and out, at some point in the thick of these tremendous events.

All the rest of the race, " the nations," seem to be gathered in the armies and leading men, generals and princes, in Palestine and Jerusalem.

This simple brief gathering up makes clear the crisis outlined in this story. It involves the Jew nation and people. It involves the true body of believers, throughout the earth, and it involves the entire race of men.

Dissolving Views.

Now, we turn for a quiet, clear, brief, look at this book of Revelation. It is clearly the crisis book. There are three or four chief current teachings of the meaning of Revelation.

But we will stick to the rule we have been following. We'll take the story as it runs in the simple surface meaning of the words.

It seems clear that this little ten-leafed book is made up mainly of a series of dissolving views.

They cover a small period of time, about three and a half years, and a little more.

It will be seen that this follows the teaching rule, of repetition, from different angles, to get all clear and full.

It is much like looking at some huge building, from this point of view, and then that. Here the sweep is so broad, and the action so intense, that only so can a full clear understanding be had.

There seem to be seven of these views in all. The first covers the whole swing of events from first to last. It runs through chapters four to the close of seven.

It begins with the upper scene of the throne.[1] And then Jesus appears, as the Lamb slain, in direct action on the earth.[2]

He takes the title-deeds to the earth, and breaks the seal. It is the act of an heir taking possession of his property. This is the meaning of breaking the seals, *i. e.*, opening the title-deeds, and claiming possession. The scene here is earthwide.

The breaking of the seals is followed by certain tragic events on earth. The principle of action here is significant. Four times the permissive word "come" rings out.

Free choice is being allowed fullest sway. The Creator's partial gracious restraint on evil is withdrawn; simply that. Evil is to have its full fling.

Man is in action unrestrained. Armed peace, war, famine, death, religious martyrdom, these

[1] Chapter 4. [2] Chapter 5.

come in quick succession, and pile up together in a terrific climax.[1]

Then there is a distinct break in the action, that is in its character. Up to now it is man in action.

What follows now is distinctly not man's action. The earthquake, the heavens shaken, men terror-stricken, this points to some power in action, distinctly not human.[2] It is so openly recognized.

There is a parenthesis between these two lines of action. Chapter seven is the parenthesis. Before the earth is "hurt" in that exceptional way, two significant things occur.

The Jews on the earth are "sealed" by the Holy Spirit's touch.[3] That is, through the touch of the Holy Spirit, the Jews are led to recognize Jesus, now evidently in action, as their Messiah.

And so they become a radically changed people, in spirit. They now become the witnesses on earth to Jesus and the truth. This is one significant thing at this point.[4]

The second is as significant. Those on the earth, who have in their hearts been trusting Jesus as Saviour, suddenly find themselves up in his presence.

And there's the wonderfully winsome description of them as the blood-washed throngs, and then of their supreme happiness in Jesus' own presence.[5] This is the second of these two significant events.

[1] Chapter 6: 1–11. [2] Chapter 6: 12–17.
[3] See Ephesians 1: 13; 4: 30.
[4] 7: 1–8. [5] 7: 9–17.

And it is most striking to note that the new witnessing group, the Jew, is prepared before the other witnessing group, the Church, is taken away. Love's faithful witnessing to Jesus and the truth never fails. This continuance of witnessing is striking.

This makes a clear grouping of events. There's the five-itemed tribulation under evil unrestrained doing its worst. Then the Jew changed, the Church caught away, and then the visiting of judgment on evil.

This is the first of these dissolving views. It covers the swing of events from the time our Lord steps directly into action until the partial visitation of judgment on evil. Now, each of the following views picks up some part of this, and explains, makes it clearer.

Righting Wrongs.

The second view runs through chapters eight and nine. It gives detailed information about that supernatural visitation of judgment. It tallies with the bit in chapter 6: 12–17.

But it is striking to note here the *process* in this judgment. It is simply by the withdrawal of restraint on the spirit powers of evil. They are now allowed their full fling, yet still within carefully marked limits.

The climax here is fearsome. Countless hordes of unseen demons are loosed out to torment men. But they can't touch these witnessing Jews who had been sealed, nor those who under these circumstances, at last decide to accept the Saviour.

Then there's a distinct break. The seven un-

written " thunders " make plain that all this will be more terrible than can be told.

And it is also made clear that now the wrongs of earth are at last to be righted. There will be no more delay. That's chapter ten.

The third view lets us see what is going on in Jerusalem during that man-directed tribulation, before the visitation of judgment.[1] It tallies with chapter 6: 1–11.

The Jew is a nation in Jerusalem. The sacrificial worship is in full swing at the temple. But it is under greatest distress and persecution by the nations.

Two men speak the truth out boldly, to these obstinate Jew thousands. They really personify the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They have miraculous power to verify their words.

This runs through three and a half years. Intensest hatred finally results in their violent death. Then the crowds, at last, are awed as they come to life again.

They ascend up, through the blue, on a cloud, before the awestricken gaze of the crowds. This third view covers that same tribulation period under man's leadership.

Another broad view of the full swing of events is given now,[2] with much detailed information.

The Jew nation gave birth to the Christian Church. Now, that Jew nation, re-formed, reorganized, is being supernaturally preserved in the thick of persecution.

The withdrawal of the Holy Spirit has led to a conflict in the lower heavens. And Satan has

[1] Chapter 11. [2] Chapters 12, 13, 14.

been cast down to the earth, "having great wrath."

It is at this significant point that the Lawless-AntiChrist comes into action. He runs riot, but within a strict limit of time, that same three and a half years.

He has an outstanding religious associate persuading the gaping crowds. Things go to the very worst pitch.

There's a parenthesis put in here for the believing ones, in the midst of this sorest testing time. It is a plea. Each one's experience will be according as he holds steady and true, in simple faith in Jesus, under this sorest fire test.

Some will wobble. Some will suffer actual bodily death. Some will go through fiercest fire as untouched as the three Hebrew young men in that seven-times heated furnace.[1]

Then with startling suddenness, these who trust the Saviour, in the thick of all this riot, they suddenly find themselves up in the presence of their Lord. They have been caught up out of the riot of evil.[2]

And quickly follows that partial visitation of judgment on the system of evil heading up in Satan's AntiChrist.[3] This is the fourth view, a broad one, covering the entire period.

Another break or pause comes here. So each view stands out clear and sharp. This one has to do wholly with the partial visitation of judgments.[4] It is essentially a judgment on the system of evil, on individual men only as they are a part of that system.

[1] 13: 10. [2] 14: 1–5. [3] 14: 6–20. [4] 15–16.

Those believing in Christ are away. The Jew nation in Jerusalem, and scattered, are now the witnesses to their Messiah. All the rest of the race make up the seething crowds.

Restraint Withdrawn, Partly.

The "wrath of the Lamb" is now in action. Wrath is purity *writhing* (actual meaning) in action against impurity. Up in his presence those who, having held steady under fire, "come off victorious," are joyously singing.

With them safely away judgment is begun on the earth. Yet it is within gracious limits. The witnessing Jews are there but untouched by these judgments.

And it is through the withdrawal of the creative touch on all life. Even this partial judgment simply consists in letting men alone, partly.

The results run through epidemics, befouled waters, torrid heat, and confusion among the leaders of evil. Then follows demon activity. This connects with chapter nine.

Now, under unseen demon inspiration, there's a rallying of all against God. There's a great gathering in the wide plains of Esdraelon.

The previous bits make clear that this rallying attack is against Jerusalem, against the Jew nation entrenched there now faithful to their Jesus-Messiah, and so against God himself.

Then comes the tremendous wind-up in the one earth-wide earthquake. It centers in Jerusalem, called "the great city," specifically so designated in that Jew-Jerusalem vision.[1]

[1] Chapter 11: 8.

The city of Jerusalem is utterly destroyed, disrupted. One recalls that it is situated on the line of the greatest geological break in the earth's surface.

This is the fifth view. It covers the last item in the whole broad outline. The visitation of judgments comes swiftly after the conversion of the Jew and the taking up of the Church.

A description of the system of evil makes up the sixth view. The system is called Babylon. It's a strange foul mysterious system running through the ages.

Now it uses one historical unit, and now masks itself behind another. But always it is the same foul God-defying loathsome thing. It is described in a very instructive way, and then its utter doom pronounced. This is chapters seventeen and eighteen.

"To His Own."

And then comes the great climax of glory.[1] The scene beggars language, Greek and English. Jesus is openly seen, coming in the glory of his own person. The description goes back to that opening page of Revelation. The throne scene in chapter four comes to mind.

His name is not known, and yet there are four names given him here. And they can't all tell the story. For names tell character. And his character, he himself, can't be put into human words.

There is a name that describes his task. It's the errand given into his hand from earliest crea-

[1] Chapter 19.

tion morn up to this Kingdom climax. Here he is "Faithful and True." In all, he had been true and faithful to the Father's will.

There's an unknown name growing out of his experience at Calvary and the tomb. This cannot be told. Nobody can take in what he did when he died.

His garment here is dipped or plunged in blood, his own. The blood colouring dominates. It never comes out. His name here is not known. It cannot be known. No language can spell it out.

There's a third name, "the Word of God." He is God himself talking out to man, in speech, in action, in person.

It brings to mind the creative week when "he spake and it was done,"[1] and the first page of John's other book about Jesus.[2] This tells his personal character, and chief characteristic. And then there is his official name, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords."

His mere presence settles the conflict. He merely appears in the native glory of his person. The enemy collapses. Their defence collapses. Their obstinacy remains—for a brief moment.

"They gather themselves together." They would need to. It's their supreme rally. Then it collapses. And Satan himself, embodied in the AntiChrist-beast and the false religious leader, he is put out of action, sheer out.

Then comes the wondrous clearance. The Jew begins his gracious mission to all the race. Swept

[1] Genesis 1; Psalm 33: 9. [2] John 1.

by the Jesus-Messiah passion he becomes as a nation of Pauls, in spirit, in intensity, in the Jesus passion.

The redeemed, clad in blood-washed garments of purity, begin their gracious new service with the King. They administer the Jew Kingdom down on the earth.

From their headquarters up in the air, in the King's own presence, they are busy here and there in blessed service on the earth. But that's really our next story. So the King comes to his own. And now his own receive him with great joy.

When King George the Fifth came to the throne he named his eldest son at once as Prince of Wales.

Following time-honoured custom the Prince went to the ancient polygonal castle Carnarvon, in Wales, with its slender turrets.

It had been built back in the twelfth century by Edward First, when the Kingdom of Wales acknowledged him as sovereign, and his baby son was named as the first Prince of Wales.

The present Prince came to the castle. It was shrouded in darkness and silence. He knocked loudly at the great door.

There was no answer. The darkness seemed darker. A second time he knocked loudly. And there was no answer. The silence could be felt in the dark night. A third time the Prince persistently knocked at the armored door.

And now the door flung open wide. The halls were flooded with light, and bursts of joyous music made the air of the castle vibrant.

The Prince had come to his own, and at last his own gladly received him. The king's son bore in his own person the royal dignity of his father. Prince and king were acknowledged.

Our Prince, the King's Only-Begotten, came to his own and knocked. In Eden he knocked at the doors of man's free choice.

He asked to come into the castle of his life, the inner intimacy of fellowship, through his own free choice. But the door was not opened.

He came again and knocked at the door of free choice. In Jerusalem, at the king's door of the Jew nation, he knocked.

He remained knocking, persistently, patiently. He would go in only through a door opened on the inside. The door stayed shut, insolently, aggressively, then murderously shut.

But he will come again. Love persists. Persistence wins. Love doesn't fail. Again he'll come. And now the door will be flung wide. They will joyously shout, "Blessed is he! Blessed is he that cometh! Hallelujah!"[1]

Then as he comes to his own, the Jew nation will come into its own heritage. And the race, and the earth, and the whole creation, will come into its own.

Eden will have a fresh start.

There's a Throne of widest sweep,
Just through the wondrous blue,
Soft green light now shining through;
Storms all past and peace deep.

[1] Matthew 23: 39; see Psalm 118: 22–26 f.c.

There's a Cross on yonder hill;
Its reaches eager tell
Highest heights, and lowest hell,
Farthest man, stiffest will.

There's a tomb of hardest rock,
Empty since that glory morn;
Earth's imperial seal a-mock,
Death's power all quite shorn.

There's a wondrous Son of Man;
The Cross his glory span;
The Throne with his glory glows;
Love in my heart o'erflows.

There's a Book here in my hand;
My sight grows slowly clear;
That Voice gets so quietly dear;
Crowds push; my feet steady stand.

There's a peace ever singing;
There's joy ever ringing;
Peace through the Blood, made so sure;
Joy in my heart made pure.

There's the Day coming soon now;
We'll meet him on the way.
Every knee to him shall bow.
Quick, Jesus! Have full sway.

(S. D. G.)

6. The Gracious New Order of Things, For the Renewed Race, the Faithful Jew, and the Victorious Church, On This Same Old Earth.

The Story: Revelation 20: 4–6, with Numerous Parallels

Love Wins Out.

Love's memory is always in its youth. It never ages. Seasoned, matured, ripened, it never grows old. Love laughs at calendars and clocks. It's always New Year's Day. Love only recognizes morning. It is always morning.

This is the aftermath of the Story here. There is to be a New Order of Things on the earth.

It had been promised to Abraham out under the stars. But that's so long ago! Yes, by man's bulky reckoning. But not by Love's. Love can keep even calendars young.

Love has conquered, thus far. Countless millions of the earth, through the long spaces of time, have chosen freely and right. Through fog and storm, and steep hill-roads, they have chosen to come into intimate touch with their Father-God.

Many a one has been eating of the Tree of Life, intimate fellowship with the Father, through free choice.

The Jew nation has made its choice. It's been a free choice. They have chosen Jesus, their Messiah-King. They are giving him joyous voluntary homage, with singing hearts.

The Church has chosen. These persons of

every clime and latitude, every colour and rank, have made free choice. They have chosen Jesus as their personal Saviour, from sin, and to a life of cultural holiness.

And now the old earth is to be made over into an Eden Garden anew, in large part. The race is to have a fresh start.

It will be under radically changed conditions. Satan has not played fair. God has been fair, full fair to every one, including this strange traitor spirit prince.

Evil had gotten a tremendous lead through his deception and intrigue. Man had been hurt. His eyes have blurred, and gone partly blind.

Satan has now been put out of action, for a time. Memory will still be alert. The night-time past can never be forgot. The very earth has ugly scars.

Man is to have a fresh opportunity. The Eden days are to be restored, as far as may be. Winter is past and gone. Spring has come to the earth. The time of the singing of birds and the fragrance of flowers has come.

The story here is very brief. Just twenty-one lines given to it in this Bible lying open here. But that's full enough. These few lines take you straight back, by the shortest way, to the old prophetic pages.

And there the leaves fairly glow with the glory of the coming day. Now it has come. We'll look at that in a moment.

There are just two outstanding bits in this brief story. That they are so few, only two, and so brief, gives intense emphasis to them.

And this seems to be the purpose. They are really put in as additions to the earlier prophetic picture.

Those Serviceable Serving.

The first of these has to do with the Church. That word is used here in its own first meaning. One forgets the vast ecclesiastical establishments, with their classical architecture, and huge statistical totals.

It brings up rather the faces of these who have accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour. They are included in that huge organization in all its ramifications, and outside its walls.

This could not be in that old prophetic picture of coming glory. For there is no Church there. It came into being on Pentecost. It comes in the interim of the Kingdom. It grows out of the emergency of that Jew rejection of the Messiah-King.

Now it is seen in action, full action. It takes first place. It dominates the Jew Kingdom. The Jew Kingdom dominates the race down on the earth. The Church reigns from above the earth, but in most intimate touch in the life of the earth.

There are thrones, not merely one; many. A throne is a seat put up above those round about. It is a seat occupied by one in authority.

It is a center of power, and of action. The one seated there sees and directs. He administers the affairs of those before him. This is the meaning of the word "thrones."

"Judgment" is given to those on the thrones.

That word simply means the insight that discriminates, the will that decides, and the power to make the decision effective.

There is insistence on the right. There is searching out what is wrong. There is action decided on. There is power to have the thing made right. All this is in that word judgment, both the English word and the word underneath here.

There is a simple but significant word used to describe these who sit on the thrones, and exercise the right and power of judgment.

The word "martyr" is not used here. But that word, used elsewhere for the same group, is the accurate expressive word.

There are two groups of these. There are those who have suffered actual martyrdom in their "testimony of Jesus." And those who have suffered martyrdom in spirit, in every other way except this. There are countless numbers who have experienced martyrdom in spirit, endlessly, and do.

This is the description now given of these. They are now to "reign." They are to reign "*with Christ.*" They have grown the needed traits of character to qualify them for this reigning service.

There have been those, many, likely most, who have been taken away, and up, out of the tribulation down on the earth. For that is a matter of Christ's blood. They have accepted him as Saviour.

But they have not grown the needed characteristics to qualify them for this bit of needed

service. It is only following fully, in spite of martyr experience, that grows these needed qualities.

There will be crowded school-rooms up there. Many saved people will be starting in the primary grades. They could have gone to school here, but they didn't. So they don't know how to do what now needs to be done.

These on the thrones have been through the stiff school courses down here. They have been growing the qualities needed. Now they use them in this needed service. This is the one thing emphasized in this brief description.

The New Order of Things.

The second thing stands as sharply out. It puts emphasis on the resurrection of these redeemed ones. That word resurrection is used in its plainest meaning.

Most of these have died. Now they live again. That empty new-hewn tomb has led the way to countless empty graves over all the earth. Many a green-brown patch of sodding has been disturbed.

Those still living on earth at the resurrection time, in touch of heart with Christ, know a change in their bodies answering to the new conditions of life. Now they are all together in the resurrection life ready for school, *or* service.

Now, let us, for a few moments, follow the trail of these few descriptive lines back to that prophetic glory-picture in the older pages.

This has been given rather fully in "Quiet Talks about Jesus." There, quite full references

have been included to book and chapter and verse.

Here we'll simply look at a few of the bolder lines of the picture. The common characteristic of life on the earth in the New Order of Things is the subject of this picture. It surely does take hold on one's heart to-day in the midst of such different conditions.

There is to be a righting of all wrongs. Yet there will be no violent force used. Great peace, of both inner heart and outer life, will dominate the race.

Over and over it is emphasized that gentle but absolutely impartial fairness will decide all difficult questions arising. The sense of right and justice will control to an unparalleled degree.

The *poor* are specially provided for. That is the great majority, everywhere, all the time. There will be none hungry, nor cold, nor poorly clad, nor unemployed, yet no drudgery.

Broken hearts will be healed up, family circles reunited, prison doors unhung; no disappointment in plans; no longer the slaving sense of fear that now hurts body and brain so much.

There will be radical changes *in nature*. That one last terrific earthquake, occurring on the most marked geological fault in the earth's crust, that'll make changes in the topography in Palestine and Jerusalem.

Great rivers will flow there, both west and east. The Dead Sea will be quite changed, healed. The light of sun and moon will be restored to their natural shining.

This will make changes in the surface of the

earth. Malarious swamps, poisonous growths, drought, and untempered heat, all this unnatural sort of thing will be quite gone.

The *animal* creation is included. Ferocious and poisonous animals will lose these dreaded traits. Meat-eating beasts will change their diet to grain and herbs. Cruelty to animals, and danger from animals, will be forgotten, for all violence will have ceased.

All this, be it noted keenly, will be *gradual*, following the natural law of life. Yet it will really be speedy and complete.

And some one, with lifted eyebrows and cynical sceptical smile, asks "What pipe dream is this?" The answer simply is that this is part of the Story of the Book.

It is the actual composite picture traced in these older pages. It is really comforting to take language at its simple surface sensible meaning.

What an optimist this old Book of God is! The painter-artist here is a realist, a real realist. He paints things as they actually are.

The black is put in just as black as it really is. And it is surely black, pot-black, grimy gray black, all shades and degrees of ugly blackness, black ugliness.

And he paints in the other colours, too. He must. They are in the actual picture. He simply paints the picture true to life.

And when *all* is seen, it at once captures eye and heart that the bright dominates the picture. The glory floods your eyes.

And, be it keenly remarked, those ugly smeary

black smudges come through free choice, choosing badly. And again it is keenly noted that it is the same with the golden colouring. It comes through free choice, man's free choice. Choosing freely and choosing only right, the one pure winsome right right.

The Jew is now faithful. He is true to his rarest power of free choice. The Church is victorious. The barnacles have been sloughed off.

The real Church stands out in its beauty, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible to all wrong-doers as an army with banners. Free choice is in full flower and fruitage.

And the race is renewing its youth. Things are working out on the old Eden ideal at last.

7. The Final Glorious Victory; Free Choice Choosing Only Right; God's Patience Rewarded.

The Story: Revelation 20: 7 to 22: 21

The Line of Beauty.

The circle is the line of perfect beauty and strength. It has neither end nor beginning. But it has a center. That center defines and decides. It radiates and dominates.

Love is a circle. It keeps on the go, clear around, and never stops. There is no end at either end.

The end is found to be a new beginning, an endless beginning. Love has a heart. Its heart radiates and dominates all through and clear around.

This Bible Book is a circle. It is the story of love. So it has no end. But it has a throbbing heart.

You are apt to think of that creative Eden as the beginning. But it isn't. There is something before that. As you look, and listen for the heart-throb, you find it farther back than Eden.

Eden is the point of contact. It is there the heart-throb throbs with your heart, if you're in touch with that heart-throb.

The line of beauty and strength Eden makes doesn't begin nor stop. It goes clear around. Eden runs into the other Eden, the enriched Garden-City Eden. The circle is complete.

You might think that the Garden-City Eden on the last page of the Book is an end, the end. But it isn't. There is no end. It simply continues the wide blessed circle made by the throbbing-heart center.

The Crisis of Choice.

Turn now to the story again. There is another crisis. It is the last. It must come. It is the crisis of free choice. Free choice dominates. This is the meaning.

Satan is loosed out, with his countless evil-spirit hordes. Why? In the presence of evil, active and aggressive, men must make their choice. This thing of free choice dominates the crisis.

Then, this essential gracious purpose served, Satan and his cohorts are *cast* out, and into. It's the same word, " cast," used later of death,

and of those whose adverse choice has been noted.

They go by the gravity of their evil choice down into the lake of burning. Evil choice makes that fearsome lake, and dominates it. There is no fire so intense and fierce as friction fire.

It is most striking that the idea of physical force is not in the word underneath that English word " cast."

They are simply set free to follow the gravity of their deliberate persistent free choice. It can take them in only one direction, down, toward one center, down.

So the judicial impartial judgment of the Throne is given. They are set free of all influence except that of their choice.

There is only one result. The gravity of their choice is a gravity down. They follow it. It intensifies its speed by its own motion.

Then death, and the spirit abode of the dead, both are out of action among men, for good and all. The lake of burning receives them. The gravity of their character takes them to their true center of gravity.

A Study in Gravity.

Then there's a throne, *the* Throne. It is a dazzling throne, light-flooded, light-flooding. There is One sitting there. He is wholly indescribable. Language fails.

His face is like the sun; it is as the lightning; the purity of it, the glory of it, the glory of its purity!

The soiled earth, and the befouled heavens, flee precipitately away. There is found now no place in either for the marks of the dire tragedy whose scene they had been.

And now there is a second resurrection. It takes in all others of the race, through all time, not included in that blessed first resurrection. All this countless throng now comes up before the throne for its decision.

The principle underlying the decision is most significant. It is wholly a matter of how they have chosen. They are judged according to the feelings and aims and actions that have actually controlled.

This is the clear meaning of the word under that English word "works." Each one decides his own status and his own future. His choices guide the decision of the Throne. The human imprint dominates.

Now, there's a touch of new life in earth and its outer surroundings. The creative hand is in action. The word under that English word "new" means restored to its true first condition.

It's the same planet with its enveloping surroundings. It has been hurt, soiled, scarred. Now it is restored to its true self, as originally made. The sea is gone, with its ceaseless unrest and storm and separation.

There are two outstanding descriptions of the restoration. Each ends with a decided emphasis on purity, and on free choice. The first, purity, is first in meaning and beauty. It comes through free choice.

The Bridal Climax.

There are two words that catch one's eyes instantly, *bride* and *city*. These tell the whole story. It could not be better told. Each word is a superlative.

Bride is a tender word. It is love in its tenderest mood, with only one more so, when new life comes.

Ideally a bride is a woman who has come to the full prime of beauty and maturity and purity. She is the chosen of her other self, whom she has chosen.

She is at the threshold of a new life, a new fullness of life. The one characteristic trait of that new life is in one word, fellowship.

Two that are one, in aim and sympathy, in tender love and in purity, these are now to be intimate intimates in their new life together.

Love can now have its highest expression. It can give itself that new life may come, in its own image.

And the one dominating thing that stands out, in and through, blending and blessing, is personal free choice. He has chosen her as his other complemental self. She has chosen him as her one true other self.

She is now to become a *wife*, skillfully *weaving up* all the fine threads of their new life in one rarest fabric.

He is now to be her *husband, banding and binding together*, with the unbreakable bonds of love, all their one life together. This is the simple native meaning of that word bride.

What a story! It's a full length picture of

Eden, full width, too, and full depth. Beauty of person, maturity of powers, a new life beginning, join in the intimate fellowship of love and purity.

The possibility is now at hand of love, at its best, giving itself thoughtfully out, and all comes through the highest personal act, free choice. All this is in that word *bride*.

And this, one notes thoughtfully, is the word, the thought, put into John's mind, and put on his tongue, as he looks. It is suggested to him. One can understand full inspiration in the very word used here.

That other word is *city*. The city is man's creation, the garden God's. The garden in Eden is now a garden-city.

The city stands ideally for culture. It gathers up, and gathers together, and puts in its truest highest setting, the best culture of man's brain and heart and hand.

These two now join in a blessed oneness. What God creates and what man creates have come into ideal fellowship. Blessed bridal!

Tenting with Us.

Now a voice rings out. It's easily recognized. It's been heard several times before. It comes from the Throne. That Throne is still in direct action. Those clearing up decisions are quickly followed by touches of new life.

The voice says "Listen; listen keenly; look; look eagerly. God himself is now pitching his tent down on the earth with man.

"He is going to live neighbours with them.

They shall be his own kinfolk. God himself shall companion with them, *their* God."

It has a familiar sound coming through John's pen. It brings up vividly the first leaf of his other book, written not long since. "He pitched his tent down amongst our tents, close up. And we beheld his glory."[1]

But there is more, much more, more beyond words, but of the same sort. Then he was veiled in human garb. Now he is seen in his own native blaze of glory.

But the same heart is within, and now free to do all it would. All tears bedimming human eyes, and wetting human cheeks, are to be wiped —away? No, it's better than that—wiped *out*. They cease to be there or anywhere. So *he* says.

Death is outlawed. It has always been an outlaw. Now it is put to death, with no power of resurrection. And pain—imagine that!—pain of body and pain of heart, sorrowing, sobbing, all gone, and clean forgot.

And with the peculiar emphasis of authority, and of brevity, that indescribable One on the Throne, speaks in a human voice, in one's own mother tongue, "Behold, I make all things over new."

And again the emphasis of repetition, and of brevity, comes in one word, underneath, "done!" And underneath is put the authoritative signature: "I am—the A and the Z and all between."

And the overflowing fullness of that great heart, that broke once down here, seems unable

[1] John 1: 14.

to stop. There's water, unfailing water, living water, for all the thirsty.

The Gravity Drag.

And then there's the eager plea for free choice to choose to overcome, in spite of the stiffest subtlest fighting. It's a word sent down to us, by John, for the meanwhile.

And then there's a heart-breaking climax for those who refuse to choose. Love warns, even though it sorely hurts.

And the grouping here is most significant. It is meant for the meanwhile, the to-day. It is meant for men and women in the thick of the fight down on the battle-field.

It is simply a plain, graciously plain, telling the logical outcome of using free choice badly, wrongly. Listen: The cowardly, the weak wobblers swinging this way and that, and those who stubbornly refuse to accept the word of this One on the Throne, these find themselves in queer company, loathsome company.

The foul, who send out a stinking odor, those who use violent physical force, the lustful, the demon experts, those who worship any (including themselves) except God alone, and all shades and sorts of those who tell lies by word or act—that's the loathsome grouping.

And the reason why is striking. There's nothing arbitrary here. It's wholly a matter of free choice freely made. The kinship of choice links these together. They are blood brothers in choice. The gravity of choice pulls them toward their true logical center of gravity.

This is the first of the two outstanding things in this climax of Revelation. It is the chief thing. It has first place. It is by itself. There is no second.

God's Garden City.

The second thing is merely a description of this first. It is simply a making plain, yet more detailed plain, God's ideal for man and himself together.

Again it is the *bride,* and the *city.* And the two are coupled. The bride is at home now in this ideal city. The race is gathered as a family around the Father.

The Jew is remembered in the gates of the city, and in its name. There is a new depth of meaning now in the old name Jerusalem. It is indeed the City of Peace, a peace never dreamed of—by man. These now are blessed memories of the Jews' racial mission.

The Church is remembered in the foundation stones. These are gracious memories of its mission to Jew and to all the race.

The race has come home. All this is the picture of the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. The ripe maturity of purity and beauty has been attained.

New life has begun. Rarest intimacy of fellowship will be the atmosphere of home and city. Love can now give itself freely out in new life, new sort of life, abundant life. And all this new life is in the image of Life, Love.

This is the ideal pictured here, in words that fairly beggar language. The city gathers within

its memorial walls the rarest ripest human culture, now truly purely human.

Then in the very heart of the city the Garden is seen, God's garden in man's city. But it is all enriched. Calvary has made Eden into a fairer garden.

The river of Eden, with its four heads, is now a river of living water, crystal clear, flowing out of the throne, God's own presence.

The Tree of Life has become a grove of trees, with fruit and healing balm all the year, and everywhere. Intimate fellowship with God through human choice is now a blessed reality.

Men freely choose to do voluntary service to God and the Lamb. And the climax is in this rare simple line: "*They see his face.*"

Face to face in intimacy of fellowship, his face is reflected in theirs. And, nightlessly, into the never-ending beginning they regally reign together, God and man, man and God.

The Knotted End—Free Choice.

Then comes the epilogue, the last added word. And it is a true epilogue. There is repetition of the one outstanding thing. And there's the personal appeal ringing into the ears of men.

It is most interesting to note that throughout these pages John is constantly conscious of the presence of Jesus, that Man of Flame and Glory.

He saw him first, that Lord's day, at Patmos. He never loses sight of his face and presence. Here and there he speaks in a personal aside in the thick of tensest happenings.[1]

[1] 13: 10, 16: 15.

Now he speaks a personal word direct to John. It is about this story he has told John to write. There's a tense personal touch of certitude given to John.

Then he adds, "Behold, *I come,*" with the swiftness of an unexpected move. And the special touch of blessing is given to those who hold true.

There is some one who, throughout all this, has been guiding and explaining all to John. And when John, utterly overawed, would offer him homage he finds that this bit of service is an illustration of how redeemed men help up yonder.

And, now, there's the distinctive emphasis of a personal word, spoken directly to one's self.

It's Jesus himself, the Man of Flame, talking. He is talking with all the significant emphasis of quiet, of personal contact, of intimate friendly touch.

The writer of the Old Testament Apocalypse had been told to "seal up" the words. There were intervening events.[1] Now John is told that there are no intervening events in Jesus' plans.

This is the next item whenever he sees the time ripe to step directly into the action of the earth again.

A simple paraphrase brings out the one dominant thought in this next significant group of sentences:

He that is set in his will to be what is not right, still let him be free to follow the bent of his choice, even though it be to do the thing that

[1] Daniel 12:4, 9.

is not right. And he will find that it will be with an increasing momentum.

And then follows the gutter stage of this sort of choice. And then come the two stages of right use of free choice. And that same rhythmic momentum of degrees down and up, tragically down, blessedly up, follows each, with unfailing persistency.

And again is the reminder of the unexpected swiftness of movement when the time is ripe for intervention. And as Jesus does come he brings with him each man's due according as his choice has been.

And again there is the emphatic repetition of that certifying signature, and the blessedness of those who have chosen to make their robes "white in the blood of the lamb."

These have the full right to the Tree of Life, that has been jealously guarded for them since that Eden night set in.

Then the leaf gives a sob. It's a heart-breaking, a heart-broken sob. There's a "without." In the midst of the language-beggaring glory there is a "without."

It bears the imprint of a human foot. And the foot is under control of a sovereign will. Love tells the truth, even though it tear the inner cockles of the heart to do it.

The Ringing Call.

And to those Seven Churches, the whole circle of Christendom, back there in the beginning, comes a further clear ringing word.

The Church came first in his thought, and now

comes last. He has sent these warning words, that make up this Revelation, that the Church may understand.

And, instinctively, his distinctive personality comes, to increase the pleading note. I am the root of David whence he sprang. I am the offspring of David coming soon to set up again the David Kingdom as promised.

And when I come morning comes, the morning of a new day. I am the dazzling bright Star, in the blue, that tells that the night is over. Day is at hand, day without a night. For that Star will never go down the west.

And a rare bit of antiphonal singing makes the air resonant. The Holy Spirit rings out, eagerly, winsomely, joyously, "Come."

Instantly the chorus of the bridal redeemed picks up the word, and sends it echoing out to the farthest reach, "Come!" And every man who hears, and responds quickly, swells the chorus of "Come!"

And it goes to the man farthest out, and it goes in to the innermost recesses of every human heart that makes this use of his free choice.

But maybe somebody out there doesn't yet understand. So a new note of music fills the vibrant air. "If anybody's *thirsty*"—ah! that'll reach 'em. They'll all understand that.

And that rarely significant word, the undertone of the whole Book, sends its music once again, yet once more:—Anybody that's willing, anybody that chooses to, let him reach out his hand and take freely of the living water of life.

And then a solemn word of warning is spoken

about this group of difficult, yet gracious, messages making up this Revelation book. The subtlety of the spirit fight of the ages, intensifying toward the transition, is thus sensed and met.

And Jesus, the Man of Flame, the Man of Glory, the Man of the Throne, gives now the thrice-certified word of a witness, one who knows by personal touch. And his word is this, "*Surely I come.* With the swift movement of the unexpected, I come."

And with awed and thrilled spirit, and burning heart, John starts a chorus that finds quick rhythmic ringing response in true hearts everywhere. So the book ends in rarest vocal symphony.

I put my calendar at spring,
All the year.
The autumn winds the leaves may bring,
Yellow, sere;
Sharp wintry blasts on my windows fling
Whited snow;
Wind from far north, with biting sting,
May ever blow.
But I put my calendar at spring,
Without a fear.

I hang my calendar at spring,
Through the year.
Through all the months of ice and cold,
It gives cheer.
Through autumn's droop, and winter's hold,
Warm light shines.

Through fading hope, and evil bold,
Bright colour lines.
My calendar still hangs at spring,
Though outside's drear.

I keep my calendar at spring,
Throughout the year.
New life buds out with joyous fling;
Life so dear.
Spring brings the death of winter's sway,
In my heart.
Sweet peace within sings all the day,
With eager start.
I keep my calendar at spring,
The whole glad year.

My calendar still stays at spring;
Newest life.
The one Man's death did death's knell ring;
Death's death knife.
That empty grave the signal rings,
Spring time rife;
The sting's sheer stung; now victory sings;
A stingless strife.
My calendar e'er stays at spring;
Nature's fife.

Earth's calendar's open at spring;
Earth's new year.
Spring's God's own planning for the earth;
At the first.
It will yet replace winter's dearth;
Nature nursed.
Creation's travailings of pain
Quite forgot.

The coming morn brings life again,
All about.
Earth's calendar bursts wide at spring,
Without fear.

My calendar insists at spring;
Ever here.
Spring is the time of roses rare;
Fragrant air.
Spring is the time of beauty fair;
Without flare.
Spring is the joyous singing rhyme,
Eager start.
Spring is Jesus' reigning time,
In my heart.
Yes, yes, my calendar's at spring,
Ringing cheer.

(S. D. G.)

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